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The Institutional Impediments to State-Sponsored Community Development in Canada's North: The Case of the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation

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THE INSTITUTIONAL IMPEDIMENTS TO STATE-SPONSORED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN CANADA'S NORTH

The Case of the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation

Ross J. McMillan

This study analyzes institutional impediments to state-sponsored community development in Canada's North. Community development is defined as both the process and product of purposive social action aimed at community empowerment. Dominant modes of northern economic and political development are described and are shown to have resulted in few lasting benefits for northern communities and to have contributed to a pervasive alienation and sense of powerlessness.

Recent community development theory demonstrates that state agencies can be expected to adopt community development objectives in response to conflict or community demands -- not out of the benevolence of liberal policy makers. If community demands for empowerment wane, institutional impediments may undermine state-sponsored community development initiatives.

Impediments to state-sponsored community development are illustrated through a case study of the adoption of a community development mandate by the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation. Three institutional impediments are identified: government-imposed limitations on the independent actions of territorial agencies; shifting political priorities which stem, in part, from the unique form of electoral politics in the Northwest Territories; and intransigence and personnel changes within the bureaucracy.

This study finds that practitioners and theorists alike must recognize that community development is an activity concerned with power and politics. Community interests must not expect the state to implement meaningful community development activities unless it is in response to effective community demands, and must anticipate that institutional impediments may appear and undermine such efforts if these demands subside.

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1. INTRODUCTION

There is a long history of planning, development and social welfare literature on state-sponsored community development. Recent efforts by some authors point to the specific benefits which might accrue from community development initiatives in Canada's North (Dacks, 1986; Lockhart, 1985, 1987; Rees, 1986; Rees and Hulchanski, 1990; Robinson and Ghostkeeper, 1987).[1] These scholars agree that the empowerment of northern communities and the adoption of community-based developmental ethics are required to mitigate the negative effects of colonization and externally-generated resource development in Canada's northern, largely aboriginal communities.

The common premise of this literature is that decolonization and, specifically, the transfer of real decision-making authority from colonial administrators to the local level are prerequisite to the social and economic health of northern communities. Yet, like much promotional scholarship on state-sponsored community development, these works do not focus upon the institutional impediments within the state structure, both bureaucratic and political, which can preclude local control over

decisions important to communities. Indeed, such institutional impediments are seldom acknowledged. Accordingly, like much prescriptive scholarship on state-sponsored community development, the work of these advocates of northern community development provides an incomplete template to guide social action or public policy decisions and only a partial account of the northern development environment.

That many writings on northern community development do not describe or assess these institutional impediments to local empowerment follows from a presumption which appears to underlie much community development scholarship: that state agents will adopt community development goals if only made aware of the potential for community benefit. In the well-intentioned quest to demonstrate that state-sponsored community development holds promise for solving local social and economic problems, theorists have produced a body of writing that glosses over the power relations which lie at the heart of colonialism.

1.1 Purpose

This study identifies institutional impediments to state-sponsored community development initiatives in Canada's North. A case study of state-sponsored community development is used to frame the analysis. The study examines the circumstances which led to the adoption of a community development mandate in the mid-1980s by the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation (NWTHC), and identifies the forces which undermined this community development focus over the span of several years.

Three institutional impediments to northern state-sponsored community development are identified: 1) limits placed upon the independent action of territorial state agencies; 2) shifting political priorities which stem, in part, from the unique form of territorial electoral politics; and 3) bureaucratic change and intransigence. The study holds that these impediments may serve, independently or in combination, to assert state hegemony over a broad range of state-sponsored community development initiatives before potential benefits of such endeavours accrue to communities.

A principal implication of these findings is that the promise of community development cannot be realized in Canada's North unless it is acknowledged as an activity concerned with power and politics. A key corollary of this acknowledgement, and of the recognition of institutional impediments to community development, is the understanding that community development efforts will not necessarily receive the altruistic support of state agents from whence power is sought. In accordance with this recognition, community development practitioners must be cognizant of the institutional impediments which may undermine their efforts, particularly in community development initiatives involving the sponsorship of state agencies, and must be prepared to counter recalcitrant forces. Similarly, community development theorists must incorporate this recognition in their analyses if their work is to have practical application in Canada's North.

1.2 Context and Significance

While the study draws on literature which focuses on community development in Canada's North, the principal theoretical foundation for the work lies in recent, second generation community development theory (e.g., McCreary and Shirley, 1982; Ponting, 1986; Shirley, 1979, 1982a, 1982b; Wilkes, 1982). These writers find fault in much early scholarship on community development, particularly because few early works critically elucidate the role of the state in community development efforts.

The new community development proponents attempt to wrest the concept from its former heights of reification and romanticism to ground it on a more solid footing by incorporating the recognition that community development subsumes a struggle for power and control over decisions of local import. This study brings this theoretical perspective to bear in the northern context. In so doing, it adds to the growing and significant body of theory on state-sponsored community development. It also adds a needed critical perspective to the existing scholarship on community development in Canada's North, pointing out that the promise of state-sponsored community development may not be met in the North unless plans are devised which anticipate the institutional impediments that may jeopardize such initiatives.

1.3 Methodology

The theoretical foundation for this study is built through a review of the literature on community development, the state and state-sponsored community development. Similarly, a literature review provides the backdrop for a discussion of the prevailing views of community development in the North. Case study material on the NWTHC has been gleaned from a variety of sources, including personal interviews, government documents, NWTHC publications, Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly Hansard and transcripts of conferences on northern housing. Interviews with seventeen NWTHC officials, including program, construction, finance and district office staff, were conducted during the months of July, August and September 1990. The theoretical insights developed and described at the outset are applied to the case study information in order to illustrate the pertinent findings of the study.

1.4 Scope

A case study of housing in Canada's North is used in order to illustrate points with both practical and theoretical import. Housing issues provide a useful focus for such analysis. Indeed,

amongst strategies for northern community development, some authors contend that housing issues hold particular promise (see, for example, Rees 1986; Rees and Hulchanski, 1990). Yet the findings of this study are applicable to the broad range of community development endeavours characterized by state sponsorship; the conclusions need not, and should not, be interpreted as relating specifically to housing or to Canada's North.

State-sponsored community development is examined as a response to community social action in the context of decolonization. The study does not focus on state-initiated development efforts which may be labelled as community development, and nor does it examine explicitly the broad range of community self-help initiatives. The latter, while important manifestations of the desire to assert local control over community decision-making, do not necessarily presuppose a thrust to empower communities with a renascent decision-making authority which has been vested previously in external institutions. State-sponsored community development is a subset of the community self-help movement that incorporates the redistribution of exercised power as its central theme. It warrants specific analysis because it presents an immediate conundrum with both practical and theoretical implications: what impediments might emerge in state institutions which could undermine community development initiatives expressly aimed at the relinquishment of central state control?

This study does not explicitly enter into the significant debate on aboriginal self-government in Canada or the North. It does, however, touch on matters of importance in this debate, for community development in the North by definition implies a quest for the reestablishment and recognition of locally-accepted governing institutions in communities comprised largely of aboriginal people.

1.5 Organization

Section 2 describes the history, themes and characteristics of community development, and the concept is defined. Recent theoretical perspectives on community development and the role of the state and its agents in community development initiatives are introduced.

Section 3 presents a summary account of the development environment in the North. The section discusses the work of northern community development proponents, and describes the potential benefits of community development in Canada's North. It also notes that the academic literature on northern community development often overlooks factors which contribute to state involvement in community development and may not address the existence of institutional impediments to state-sponsored community development.

Case study material for the NWTHC is then presented in Section 4. The factors which led to the adoption of a community development mandate by the NWTHC are examined, followed by an account of how this mandate evolved and how it was presented to communities.

Section 5 identifies the institutional impediments which contributed to the demise of the NWTHC's community development efforts. The section presents a summary of the factors and events which gave rise and expression to each impediment, and it contends that these constraints could have been overcome if community demands for empowerment had continued.

Section 6 provides a summary of the findings and conclusions.

2. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATE

2.1 Historical Sketch of Community Development Practice

The term "community development" has been in use for over four decades, but disagreement and controversy persist over just what these words mean. Various manifestations of community development practice have often preceded theoretical development, which means that community development practitioners have found themselves engaged in activities for which they have been able to provide only scant justification. Indeed, following a period of intense community development activity in Canada during the 1960s, some proponents introspectively questioned the very existence of a definable community development concept, practice or study area (see, for example, Lotz, 1967, 1971; Bregha, 1971).

Community development does exist under various guises, but it is not easily described in a manner that does justice to the diversity of its adopted forms.

Community development appeared on the international development stage in the years following World War II, although it had been practised, in one form or another and under different labels, in preceding decades. The term community development emerged in Britain during a 1948 conference on the colonies, and came into widespread use after the release in 1955 of a United Nations document entitled *Social Progress Through Community Development*, in which community development was "tentatively defined as a process designed to create economic and social progress for the whole community with its active participation and the fullest reliance upon the community's initiative" (McCreary and Shirley, 1982:37; Ponting, 1986:140,141). It was through the United Nations endorsement that a wide range of community development initiatives gained impetus and respectability (Ponting, 1986:141).

During the 1950s, experiments in community development, most with a rural focus, were undertaken in India, the Pacific, Africa and the Americas (Lotz, 1987:41,42; McCreary and Shirley,

1982:36-38). The profusion of community development initiatives that followed these early experiments in the developing world tended to counter the other coexisting development trend prevalent during the decades after World War II -- that of centralized planning and administration (Lotz, 1987:41).

Just as variously named precursors to community development were present in the developing world in the first half of this century, so too did Canada have its own early community development harbingers. The activities and philosophies that community development has come to denote existed in Canada previously under numerous rubrics: "the co-operative movement," "the extension movement" and "the self-help movement" (Ponting, 1986:140). In spite of the vibrancy of rudimentary Canadian expressions of community development such as the Antigonish Movement in Nova Scotia and cooperativism on the Prairies, it was not until the international burgeoning of community development that the concept gained widespread favour in Canadian development practice.

The Canadian context for community development during the 1950s and 1960s seems, at first glance, to be fundamentally different than those of its counterparts in the developing world. Nevertheless, the foreign, centralized authority and decision-making which is characteristic of colonialism and which community development is employed to temper was (and is) all too well known by Canada's aboriginal peoples. Decisions fundamental to the lives of aboriginal people have for decades been vested in distant politicians and bureaucrats, most of whom possess cultural values which differ significantly from those of their aboriginal clients. The physical remoteness of many aboriginal groups was not, in and of itself, prerequisite to colonial domination; indeed, in many cases the physical separation of Indian and Euro-Canadian populations has been a specific product of colonial attitudes. Yet, even those Native Indian groups living in immediate proximity to urban areas have been largely marginalized.

Given the legacy of colonialism endured by Canada's aboriginal inhabitants, it is not surprising that the first significant state-initiated community development initiative in Canada involved the Native Indian population in Manitoba (see Legasse, 1971). The program was launched in 1959 following a three year investigation into the living conditions experienced by residents of Native Indian ancestry. In adopting the principal study recommendations, the Manitoba government threw its support behind a broad-based program with the objective of helping aboriginal communities achieve locally defined goals -- social animation or mobilization formed the core of the strategy. In a variety of forms the program achieved some success until its ultimate demise in 1968. (For accounts of the factors contributing to the program's eventual downfall see Deveaux and Deveaux, 1971:94,95; Lotz, 1987:44.)

From this inception, significant community development programs and projects, the majority of which directly or indirectly involved state sponsorship, emerged in a variety of Canadian settings and under the auspices of diverse organizations. Many were predestined to failure by their paternalistic, naive or ulterior motives (Dimock, 1971:106-111). The largest and best chronicled of these early Canadian initiatives include the social animation work of the Company of Young Canadians (Deveaux and Deveaux, 1971), the methodological experiments in participatory planning sponsored by the Agricultural Rehabilitation and Development Administration throughout rural Canada in the 1960s (Lotz, 1987; Deveaux and Deveaux, 1971), and the mid-1960s community development program thrust of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Ponting, 1986; Lotz, 1987).

From these early, flawed endeavours, community development has evolved to the point where it occupies a seemingly permanent -- if not uncertain -- niche in the Canadian development environment. Indeed, Ponting (1986:140) asserts that these early Canadian efforts were before their time and that community development will represent the development wave of the 1990s. The validity of this contention remains to be determined, but it is clear that community development, under a variety of approaches, continues to flourish in Canada.

2.2 Towards a Critical Definition of Community Development

Community development has been presented in the literature as consisting of a number of broad themes. Over the years, different scholars have focused upon different aspects of community development and have emphasized one or more approaches to the concept. Ponting (1986:141) and Shirley (1979:23,24; 1982a:20,21), following earlier authors (Sanders, 1958; Popenow, 1967; Compton, 1971), identify a number of distinct approaches to community development. While these approaches are presented as separate themes, it must be stressed that they overlap and likely are more discrete in analysis than they often are in practice.

Community Development as a Program. This mode of community development is frequently sponsored by an external agency -- either state or non-government -- within the scope of its given mandate. It tends to focus community development initiatives within the confines of a specific developmental sector or agency jurisdiction, such as business development, adult education or housing.

Community Development as a Profession. Some authors have focused upon community development work as an emerging and independent profession, replete with its own body of theory and practices. Others view community development practitioners as such only secondarily; that is, while engaged in an activity that may be identifiable as community development, practitioners' roots tend to lie in other generalist professions such as planning

or social work, or in specific sectoral professions such as civil engineering.

Community Development as a Process. This theme emphasizes the procedural or action-oriented aspects of community development. The most common manifestation of this approach is seen in the work of practitioners and theorists who focus upon community development as social animation -- the mobilization of previously acquiescent local populations over particular issues. An external actor is frequently viewed as the force behind social animation.

Community Development as a Methodology. This approach adds to the procedural facet of community development an encompassing analytical theme -- community development is seen as a distinct means to an end. This approach may incorporate a wide array of specific elements, but only as part of a broad strategy designed to achieve particular developmental objectives.

Community Development as a Social Movement. Perhaps the most broad-based theme, this approach views community development as a grass roots movement with empowerment or emancipation as its principal objective. It draws on elements of the other modes, and is often seen as a process or methodology that is employed in a variety of program areas or sectors and which utilizes the professions and extra-community assistance only as necessary.

This list represents a range of broad approaches to community development, each of which may variously inform community development literature and practice. While the program emphasis is a common theme in instances of state-sponsored community development, the social movement mode is the stuff of bottom-up, grass roots community development. A successful example of the latter approach will have a clearly defined set of objectives, while proponents of the procedural approach may view method itself as an end. Community development initiatives and accounts often specifically recognize or address only one of these underlying themes; however, regardless which general approach is adopted, the requisite characteristics of successful community development endeavours have gained relatively wide recognition and acceptance in community development theory and practice.

Characteristics of Community Development Initiatives. Successful community development initiatives -- be they state-sponsored programs or grass-roots social movements -- will most often be characterized by a number of specific attributes (see Compton, 1971:383,384; Ponting, 1986:141). While these attributes need not provide an inflexible mould, the failure of given community development efforts can frequently be traced to the fact that the following characteristics have not been fully integrated in a framework that accommodates local circumstances:

1) Members of the community must organize themselves and participate fully in the organizations or institutions they create.

2) Community members must share responsibility for the identification of community problems and for designing solutions to these problems (i.e., they must not rely solely on outside professionals).

3) The role of outsiders must, when possible, be limited to the provision of needed funds, materials and technical expertise so that the community retains control over planning its own future.

4) Community development is a learning process, and community development initiatives must be used to enhance the planning, administrative and technical skills of the community.

5) Extensive and open discussion should be the norm, and community consensus should be sought whenever possible.

It must be stressed, however, that the viable articulation of these characteristics is not easily achieved in practice. Community development holds considerable potential for engendering conflict within communities. Community members often will not share a unified vision of priorities or appropriate paths to development, and the enhancement of decision-making authority often brings grounds for local disagreement and strife that did not exist previously. The institution of community development initiatives may also raise unrealistic expectations amongst community members. Nevertheless, the alternative to constructive conflict or debate resulting in mutual gain is frequently the continuance of decision-making by powers outside the community.

Adopted Definition. Countless definitions of community development have emerged in the literature over the past four decades (see Compton, 1971:383,384; Ponting, 1986:140-142). Many of these definitions focus upon community development as a **process**, following the lead established by the United Nations. Others tend to centre on the desired **product** of community development endeavours, often stated in terms such as "economically and socially viable communities." The biases and theme-specific interests of the defining agency or author will, of course, be evident in the choice of definition.

The following definition of community development is employed in this study:

> ***Community development is both a process and product of purposive social action which results in community empowerment.***

Like most attempts to define community development this definition is intentionally encompassing; it does not endeavour to exclude any specific representation of the concept.

Underlying the definition, however, are a number of assumptions and meanings that warrant explicit note:

1) Purposive community social action is held to be the essence of community development.

2) The impetus for community development must originate within communities, rather than through the imposition of development initiatives by external sources.

3) Communities must delineate the scope and intent of community development endeavours. The definition does not limit the scope of action to the realm of social, economic or political spheres, or to any of the themes listed above.

4) Community development is both a means and an end, a process and a product. The goal will evolve and remain elusive, and the process will be iterative.

5) In stating that the result of community development is empowerment, the definition does not attempt to restrict final possibilities -- only communities can determine what empowerment will mean in given circumstances. It does, however, intentionally garner concepts of power relations and political activity into the fold of community development.

The definition of community development proposed above, particularly in its acknowledgement of the notions of social action and empowerment, is consistent with positions adopted recently in community development theory.

2.3 Recent Trends in Community Development Theory

Much scholarship has been devoted to the description of community development initiatives, frequently in the context of colonized, developing regions of the world. Many early proponents of community development have been concerned with hands-on, physical development, and have focused on technical or educational issues (McCreary and Shirley, 1982:31-38). In this mode, community development has often been seen as the benign, altruistic promotion of local skills and quality of life; theorizing has tended to be an afterthought.

Other early scholars have heralded community development endeavours as panaceas for community ills that are, in turn, compounded by a legacy of colonialism -- a collective, local sense of powerlessness and alienation. Even in recognizing the effects of colonialism on local populations, such accounts are often of limited theoretical import because they seldom assess how power relations might serve to usurp or dictate the course of community development initiatives. They also tend to overstate the capacity of community development for addressing local pathologies.

In recent years a new body of community development literature has emerged which seeks to overcome the theoretical failings of earlier work (see Ponting, 1986; Shirley, 1982a; Wilkes, 1982). Central to the pragmatic theme of these writings is a recognition that community development is necessarily concerned with power and politics, and that the practice of community development, if it is to succeed, must be informed by rigorous and relevant theory. The need to adequately conceptualize the role of the state is identified by these theorists as a vital aspect of community development theory.

These authors note that much early community development debate is steeped in both positivist and pluralist ideals, and is preoccupied with the value of a mistaken and misguided assumption that "choosing the most appropriate methodology or form of intervention would ensure political neutrality and ideological purity" (Shirley, 1982a:22). Almost exclusively, the "appropriate methodology" is seen by earlier writers to involve the deployment of rational, technical expertise, acting in the community interest, and therefore in the national interest (McCreary and Shirley, 1982:40-42). Political power is assumed to be shared evenly by all social groups in this early view of the development and political environment; the value-neutral community development practitioner is to remain aloof from the political milieu, at least until an objective and just consensus on appropriate community development goals has been reached amongst social and political equals.

Much contemporary community development scholarship takes issue with the pluralist assumptions inherent in these early theoretical constructs. The new proponents of community development note that the individuals, social groups and institutions possessing political or economic power can often exercise undue influence in the articulation of community development objectives, and that the resulting initiatives may therefore effectively serve established interests while seeming to benefit the community as a whole.[2]

The effects of power differentials on the development of these objectives is perhaps most pronounced in a colonial setting. In direct contrast to early views of community development as a wholly apolitical development activity, Ponting states:

> community development is always political, in that it is guided by one or another ideology and usually creates some relatively autonomous centres of power. Thus, community development implies some degree of conflict over the distribution of money and power, sometimes within a community and usually between the community and external actors (including state actors) who hold economic or political power over the community. Community development is thus still an act of decolonization as it was in its early days under the United Nations (Ponting, 1986:142).

Ponting's inclusion of the notion of state actors in his discussion of colonial power relations is telling of another aspect of the

new community development theory -- a recognition of the necessity to adequately theorize the role of the state in community development initiatives. This thrust is intended to counter characteristic lacunae in earlier community development theory, where "decisions are seen to emerge from some mystical force of consensus with little appreciation of power differentials, the role of the State, or interest group manoeuvring" (Shirley, 1982a:21).

Wilkes (1982:131), argues persuasively that community development theorists must also acknowledge that the state is not an objective institution in which political debates are waged in the pluralist tradition, resulting in rational, largely beneficent decisions. Recognizing that various levels of the state play significant roles in diverse community development projects, he states that practitioners must incorporate political strategies into community development efforts if their initiatives are to have real effect.

The design of effective political strategies is contingent, of course, on how one conceptualizes the state and its role in community development and, in order to succeed these strategies must include anticipation of institutional impediments to state-sponsored community development.

2.4.2 State-Sponsored Community Development

The state responds to conflict, not conscience. This is well recognized in most contemporary theories of the state, which roundly denounce the classic liberal fabrication of altruistic state institutions acting on behalf of disadvantaged social groups. While no theorist denies the existence of the altruism of individual social agents acting within the state structure, imputing such individual motives as the modus operandi of a monolithic state apparatus is to negate both telling state inaction and demonstrated state bias in favour of economically and politically powerful interests.[3]

Unlike advocates of the pluralist perspective, contemporary community development theorists recognize that the state is not a benign arena for evenly-matched political protagonists. The state is poised to mediate or mitigate conflicts between social actors, but these actors may exercise variable influence over state decisions. As well, the real substance of political debate and true justification for state action or inaction may not be readily subject to public scrutiny.

State-sponsored community development is a response to conflict or social action that results in effective demands being placed upon the state (and dominant groups) by communities. It is a product of the dynamic tension between dominant and dominated social groups -- one outcome in the ongoing social struggle which emanates from relations of power.

Since this view of community development focuses on the redistribution of power and resources away from dominant groups or central state interests to communities, it follows that resistance to state-sponsored community development initiatives emanating from dominant interests need not wane once initial conflict has subsided and a community development course of action has been initiated. Social action is the community-based impetus for state-sponsored community development, and resistance to such initiatives by opposing forces should be anticipated. One expression of this resistance, given the disproportionate influence over the state activities afforded dominant groups, is the emergence of institutional impediments within the state structure. Perhaps nowhere is institutional resistance to state-sponsored community development likely to be more pronounced than in a colonial setting, where the long standing relations of domination which may be challenged by community development are naked and entrenched.

At this juncture we step back from theoretical matters and move to a discussion of community development in the North. Lengthy forays into theory can obscure the fact that people often do not ponder social theory when they engage in social action, and can lead us to assume that state agents concern themselves solely and overtly with the perpetuation of relations of domination. We will therefore attempt to root some of these abstractions in the real world of northern development.

3. THE LEGACY OF DEVELOPMENT IN CANADA'S NORTH

This section begins with a brief account of traditional social, economic and political life of the original inhabitants of the Canadian North. The history of northern development is then reviewed, focusing on two parallel themes: economic development and political development. Emphasis is placed on the manner in which these intertwined development thrusts have found expression in the colonial system. The work of authors who advocate community development as a means of countering the negative effects of past development practices on northern people and communities is summarized. This section concludes by noting that the role of the state in community development efforts is often overlooked in the literature promoting community development in the North, and that institutional impediments to northern community development must be anticipated, given the factors which have hitherto shaped economic and political development in the North.

3.1 The Original Inhabitants of the North

Prior to the coming of Europeans, Canada's North was populated by dispersed groups of itinerant hunting and gathering peoples. Small groups of Dene, Natives speaking related Athapaskan languages, resided in the territory below the tree line. Above the tree line, Inuit peoples occupied the barrens and high arctic. The social organizations, subsistence pursuits and technologies of these peoples were aptly suited to life in the harsh northern environment.

The Dene. The pre-contact Dene were hunting, gathering and fishing people. Their subsistence pursuits and settlement patterns were dictated by the availability and location of game -- mobility was often the key to survival (Brody, 1986:89-97). In winter, local groups of twenty to thirty related individuals camped alongside major waterways where fish were readily obtainable. Periodically, smaller family groups would foray out from these base camps in search of game. During the summer months, the Dene would occasionally congregate in larger numbers, usually on waterways at sites of fish runs or at favourite gathering locations, but would disperse again as winter approached or as local resources were depleted. These summer gatherings also provided opportunity for comparative leisure, the exchange of goods and knowledge and socializing with relatives and friends (Asch, 1977:47,48; Brody, 1986:99).

As in most hunting and gathering societies, the spoils of the hunt were shared amongst members of the Dene local group in a system of generalized reciprocity. All able members of the local group were engaged in production activities, and the success of one individual or family represented success for all. This cooperative system ensured the group's survival; the intra-group distribution of food meant that every group member shared equally when hunting was poor or when one family was unlucky. The notion of reciprocity also extended beyond the local group, for if one group could not maintain its self-sufficiency due to yearly resource fluctuations, kinship ties with a more fortunate local group would be invoked and the unlucky group would temporarily join its successful counterpart. Political responsibilities were shared by all group members; decisions that affected the local group as a whole were made with the full participation and consensus of all adult members (Asch, 1977:48,49; Barnaby et al, 1977:120).

The economy of pre-contact Dene subsistence hunters was self-sufficient -- production tasks were shared by all members of the group and consumption activities were conducted collectively. Indeed, self-sufficiency and cooperation were fundamental organizing principles that also permeated social and political life. To be Dene was to be an integral member of a small, cohesive group in which each member was responsible for the welfare of all others and all group members shared equally in political decisions.

The Inuit. The pre-contact Inuit of Canada's North inhabited coastal regions along the arctic seas, with the exception of small numbers of Caribou Inuit who lived year-round on the Keewatin barren lands. Traditional coastal Inuit hunters relied heavily on sea mammals, supplemented with caribou and gathered plant foods (when available), for their subsistence needs. Mobility was fundamental to the success of the Inuit hunting and gathering way of life, and seasonal activities were dictated by the vagaries of the climate and wildlife availability. Inuit hunters converged in temporary settlements comprised largely of related families during the winter months. Seals provided the bulk of winter sustenance; they were hunted nearby the winter camps at breathing holes in the sea ice. Winter provided time for socializing and knowledge-sharing. In spring, seals, walruses and, occasionally, whales were hunted from watercraft and spring ice floes. During the summer and early autumn, the Inuit dispersed to hunt for caribou, fish for char in coastal streams and gather plants and berries in individual families or in small family groups (Balikci, 1970:22-90; Brody, 1986:93).

Winter seal meat procured by an individual hunter was shared freely amongst all close family members, and was distributed to other camp members through a complex web of meat-sharing partnerships that existed between distant relatives and unrelated individuals (see Balikci, 1970:133-138). The formalized distribution of seal meat ensured that all camp members shared equally when the communal hunt was not productive. Group membership was fluid, and individuals could call on a widespread kindred for assistance (Balikci, 1970:124,125). Like the Dene, all affected parties were involved in group decision-making. Headmen existed and were recognized as leaders of extended families, but their authority was not absolute and it was exercised informally, only after extensive consultation: as Balikci notes, "in a sense the headman's task was to achieve consensus" (1970:116).

Traditional Inuit society was thus characterized by the sharing of production and consumption activities in small, tightly knit local groups. Kinship and other social bonds between unrelated individuals provided strong ties which ensured the welfare of all group members. Again, like the Dene, pre-contact Inuit were wholly self-sufficient, relying on group cooperation, both formal and informal, to provide the necessities of life.

3.2 Economic Development in the North

The original inhabitants of Canada's North were profoundly affected by the coming of Europeans. While the substance of early ties between northern aboriginal peoples and European arrivals was largely economic, all facets of Dene and Inuit societies were to be altered dramatically by this primary tether. When assessing the patterns of economic development which emerged in the North following the arrival of Europeans, two distinct phases are readily apparent:

1) the period of early colonial activity prior to the mid-1940s, which was characterized by renewable resource harvesting, principally for the fur trade; and

2) the period following World War II, in which non-renewable resource extraction came to the developmental fore and the trapping industry began to decline.

While the decade of the 1940s provides a convenient point to mark the transition between these two developmental phases, in reality the shift in predominant economic activities has occurred gradually. As well, in spite of the apparent differences between the two phases of economic development, it must be noted that both phases are characterised by the extraction of resources from

the northern hinterland to supply market demands in southern Canada and elsewhere in the world -- the primary non-subsistence economic activities occurring in the North during both phases have been generated by external forces and have fostered dependency amongst the North's original inhabitants.

3.2.1 Pre-1940s - Renewable Resource Extraction

Participation in the fur trade represents the most enduring non-subsistence economic activity in the North. Below the tree line in the Mackenzie River drainage, the first impacts of the fur trade were manifest in the final decade of the eighteenth century. The Northwest Company controlled the fledgling fur trade in the area until 1821, when it merged with the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC). The HBC enjoyed a monopoly on the fur trade for the next fifty years, virtually free of state regulation, which enabled it to set trading standards and prices in accordance with its own economic imperatives. Initially, the impact of the fur trade on Dene hunters was marginal. The yearly subsistence round remained the driving force in Dene life, although it was now punctuated by seasonal visits to the growing number of trading posts in the region in order to obtain new foodstuffs and hunting and trapping implements (Asch, 1977:49,50).

In 1870, the HBC lost its monopoly over much of its previous domain when it sold Rupert's Land and the Northwest to Canada, and a new era of frontier capitalism was introduced to the North -- rivalry between traders became fierce and increasing numbers of trade goods were introduced into the region (Asch, 1977:50,51). As dependence on the goods obtained by the Dene through the fur trade gradually increased, trading posts began to replace the traditional Dene summer meeting locations. Indeed, traders used a variety of means to forge ties between the Dene and the posts: alcohol was offered to visiting trappers; food was sold below cost in an effort to discourage subsistence hunting away from the posts; jobs were offered to reliable trappers during the off-season summer months; welfare and credit were made available; and units of exchange specific to individual posts were introduced in order to prevent trappers from purchasing manufactured goods at other posts (Brody, 1986:195). These factors contributed to a new emphasis on the nuclear family as an independent economic entity and began the trend to settle in permanent communities.

By 1900, one hundred years following the arrival of traders in the Mackenzie River Valley, Dene dependence upon trade goods was firmly established, and settlement patterns had been irrevocably altered to meet the demands of the new economic era. At this time, money was introduced as the principal medium of exchange, heralding the end of full time subsistence pursuits and further eroding the principle of generalized reciprocity characteristic of pre-contact Dene (Asch, 1977:51,52).

Similar events had taken place in the late nineteenth century amongst the Inuit in the high arctic, although the initial Inuit introduction to things European came about through different circumstances. Early in the 1800s, whalers moved into arctic waters, following a variety of species into their summer feeding grounds. While only sporadic contact with the Inuit population occurred prior to 1850, after this time ships began to winter over in the ice near Inuit camps in order to reap the benefits of the early spring hunt. The sites were chosen with several factors in mind: the Inuit were able to provide fresh meat during the winter; they acted as guides; they provided winter clothing; and they served as general labourers. In return for these services, the Inuit received (and became increasingly dependent upon) manufactured goods provided by the whalers. Commercial whaling came to an end in 1912, but by this time the Inuit were fully engaged in sealing and trapping pursuits for the purposes of trade, and the manufactured goods on which they had come to depend were now obtained at the growing number of HBC trading posts in the high arctic (Brody, 1975:22; 1986:191-195,199).

The fur trade flourished during the first half of the twentieth century and, while subject to the effects of fluctuating prices, disease brought by southerners and periodic starvation caused by wildlife shortages, many Dene and Inuit trappers lived relatively well. In 1947, however, the world fur market collapsed, leaving a trail of dependency that would no longer be sated by the HBC (Asch, 1977:52; Brody, 1986:203).[4]

In summary, during this early phase of post-contact colonial economic activity, northern hunting and gathering peoples were encouraged (and in some cases coerced) into engaging in new, externally-generated economic activities. While participation in the growing fur trade allowed access to new forms of wealth, it also led to fundamental changes in all facets of the lives of northern peoples: it resulted in the atomization of traditional local groups; a new emphasis on individuals and nuclear families as primary production and consumption units emerged; a trend towards living in permanent settlements began; and it cultivated the germ of a dependency which remains its legacy.

3.2.2 1940s to Present - Non-Renewable Resource Extraction

While exploration and extraction of northern non-renewable resources -- minerals and hydrocarbons -- began in the early decades of this century, it was not until the years following World War II that these activities became a fickle stay of the northern economy. Like the fur trade before it, the northern non-renewable resource economy is borne of distant corporate decisions; in contrast to the fur trade, it has resulted in markedly ephemeral benefits for native northerners.

During this second phase of colonial economic development, the North has continued to provide raw materials for southern and world markets, and economic activities have remained largely

dependent on external risk capital. Wealth continues to flow from the North, benefitting outside interests. Unlike most renewable resource economic activities, non-renewable resource extraction projects are often short-term and tend to rely heavily on external labour sources (Dacks, 1981:126,127; Watkins, 1977:88; Whittington, 1986:14-17).

Northern mineral extraction began in earnest during the 1930s, expanded greatly in the years following World War II, and continues to leave an indelible mark on the North and its inhabitants. The mineral wealth which lies beneath northern lands continues to be charted and assessed by southern interests through exploration activities; the decision to extract rests on a number of production factors, including world mineral prices, the extent of ore reserves and development, extraction and transportation costs (Dacks, 1981:125-128).

Similar factors influence decisions to cease operations. When economic choices are made that result in the development or closure of mines, they can have significant impact on northern communities and on the lives of northern residents, most recently witnessed following the closure of the lead-zinc mine at Pine Point on the south shore of Great Slave Lake in 1988. In 1986, the population of Pine Point was 1558 (NWT, 1987), the sixth largest community in the Northwest Territories -- by the end of 1989 the town no longer existed.

Experiences such as this -- typical in the boom-bust pattern of economies based on resource extraction -- have led northerners to become increasingly sceptical of promises for long-term local gain when new resource extraction ventures are announced. When the Canadian subsidiary of Urangesellschaft Corporation disclosed plans in 1987 for development of the Kiggavik Mine, a major open pit uranium project near Baker Lake, it encountered considerable and ongoing community resistance over the potential environmental and social impact of the project; in July of 1990, Urangesellschaft Canada requested an indefinite delay in scheduling for the required public hearings on the Kiggavik uranium project, the fate of which is now in question.

Successful northern resistance to non-renewable resource extraction projects has its primary origins in the Berger Inquiry, which examined proposals for the construction of pipelines along the Mackenzie Valley in the mid-1970s (see Berger, 1977). In the face of the energy crisis of the early 1970s and buoyed by significant hydrocarbon discoveries in Alaska, two southern companies submitted plans to build separate pipelines running from the arctic coast to southern Canada and the United States. Berger afforded the aboriginal population of the Mackenzie Valley a full opportunity to voice their concerns over the potential effects of the pipeline projects on hunting and trapping pursuits, and at the conclusion of the Inquiry he came out strongly in favour of the aboriginal view that the pipelines would result in irrevocable harm to harvesting activities. While Berger recommended against the proposals for at least ten years (until Dene and Metis land claims were settled), exploration has proceeded, and oil and gas companies continue to weigh production factors in the same fashion as the mining industry while they ponder strategies for hydrocarbon extraction in the North.

The decisions on northern non-renewable resource extraction made by corporate interests are not based, however, solely on economic criteria -- the federal state and, more recently, the territorial state have increasingly influenced such decisions. Nevertheless, numerous authors contend that at least until the time of the Berger Inquiry, decisions on northern energy and development were made in a policy vacuum. According to Stabler and Olfert: "Absence of government policies led in the late sixties and early seventies to the predominance of business interests in determining the future of the north" (1980:386). Other authors have insisted that the very structure of the federal state apparatus involved in northern development is designed to accommodate "large-scale resource extraction projects" (Abele and Dosman, 1981:451).

The growing state participation in decisions made by corporate interests does not mean that the supportive role played by the state in northern resource extraction has been fundamentally altered in recent years. Much state involvement with such decisions has taken the form of environmental and social impact studies or hearings (such as those planned for the Kiggavik proposal), incentives to encourage native employment and attempts to minimize disruption in communities caused by major resource extraction projects (Rees, 1986:60; Whittington, 1986:19). These mitigatory state efforts do not signify a new state advocacy role in development, but rather:

> they ultimately serve only to legitimize both corporate and government ideological biases. Regulations and conditions imposed by governments are a nuisance to the extractive industries in the North, but the corporations recognize that they are a small price for the continued opportunity to engage in enterprises that ultimately will accumulate capital. Hence, although governments often appear to be working in opposition to the corporate interests in the North, they must ultimately reflect the legitimacy and primacy of the values of profitability and cost efficiency in economic development policies (Whittington, 1986:19,20).

This second, extant phase of colonial economic development in the North has profoundly affected the lives of northerners. During the earlier phase of development, trappers sold commodities, not labour power; in hard economic times, they could most often still sell furs at lower prices to obtain the new necessities of life and they could fall back on traditional subsistence pursuits in order to meet basic needs. The second phase of northern economic development has drawn many native northerners into the wage economy and has seen the culmination of the trend to settle permanently in established communities. The emphasis on the individual or nuclear family in the wage economy and in the provision of assistance by the state has further eroded community and kinship support networks. Those

individuals fortunate enough to find themselves employed in resource extraction projects often do not enjoy lasting benefits due to the inherently short-term nature of such endeavours, and during hard economic times wage earners cannot sell their labour power at any price, leading to a new kind of dependency -- one which relies upon the extensive provision of needs by the state.

3.3 Political Development in the North

Much of the pace and form of northern political development has been determined by the legacy of distant decisions governing economic development and, to a lesser extent, Canadian sovereignty in the North. The Canadian state maintained a minimal presence in the North during the fur trade years, and only asserted its hegemony in response to the perceived imperatives of war and non-renewable resource development during the middle years of this century.[5] Throughout the early phase of economic development, the colonial nature of federal state institutions remained substantially unaltered.

The colonial administration of the North has, however, undergone changes in recent decades. One of the more significant changes --the creation of quasi-independent territorial and local state institutions commencing in the mid-1960s -- provides a convenient boundary between the two fundamental periods of political development in the North:

1) the years prior to 1967, which were characterized by political and bureaucratic rule by Ottawa and which involved a gradual increase in state intervention in northern affairs; and

2) the years after 1967, which saw the creation of a territorial administration removed from Ottawa, resulting in a gradual transfer of state functions and responsibilities to the territorial and local levels.

3.3.1 Pre-1967 - Early Colonial Political Development

The early period of state involvement in the North was noteworthy in that only a fleeting federal presence was in evidence until well into the twentieth century. For many decades, state involvement in the North was solely represented by the widely dispersed phalanx of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, whose primary purpose was to keep order for the benefit of the more zealous colonizers of the day -- the fur traders and the missionaries. Periodic forays into the North by federal representatives were necessary to negotiate treaties with the aboriginal population in order to ensure that no conflicts over land use arose.[6]

Unlike the openly assimilationist federal policies which faced Native Indians in southern Canada, a somewhat different set of state priorities were encountered by the North's original inhabitants during the past two centuries. Prior to the 1940s, the Canadian state viewed northern aboriginal populations as best left to their own devices and traditional pursuits (Abele, 1987:311,312). The national development agenda had been focused on the west for many years, and northern Natives were not subject to a like degree of structured marginalization as their southern counterparts because they did not hinder a significant development drive. In contrast to southern Canada, only two Indian reserves exist in the entire Northwest Territories (and these were recently established).

The federal administrative apparatus overseeing the North was formalized in 1905, with the passing of the *Northwest Territories Act*. The legislation was overtly paternalistic in its intent and it signalled the beginning of a period of active colonial rule from Ottawa that would last for over fifty years. The power to rule, however, was not vested in elected officials. According to Abele: "Until the 1950s...the powers listed in the act were exercised by a small group of Dominion civil servants resident in Ottawa" (1987:312). Indeed, it was not until 1951 that the first residents of the Northwest Territories were elected to the governing territorial Council, which was headed by an appointed Commissioner (Dacks, 1981:92).

By the 1940s, the North had fallen under the administrative purview of two related colonial structures: while the territorial Council exercised its authority over all residents of the Northwest Territories, the Indian Affairs Branch, under the auspices of several federal departments, played an increasingly significant role in the daily affairs of the aboriginal inhabitants of the North. Both these administrative arms of the federal state came to influence community life in significant ways, particularly after the decline of the fur trade. For its part, in 1956 the territorial Council requested that the federal government either offer support for fur prices or embark on a new program of economic development in the North following the fur trade collapse to enable northerners to participate more effectively in the wage economy. Not surprisingly, the federal government opted for the latter alternative (Asch, 1977:52,53).

This approach involved the renewal of a variety of both coercive and well-intentioned attempts to encourage Native northerners to settle in permanent communities, ostensibly so that they would have access to education, housing, health and other government services (Asch, 1977:53-55; Brody, 1975:29-32; Thomas and Thompson, 1972:9,10,23). Beginning in 1954, the federal government stationed Northern Service Officers in each community; their primary task was the political education of local residents, as well as coordination of government assistance services. Five years later the position title was changed to Area Administrator, reflecting a change in responsibility focus from education to program administration (Abele, 1987:313; Bean, 1977:131; Dacks, 1981:106).

Until the late 1960s, the growing number of bureaucrats and other state officials who delivered state services and programs served as quasi-local governments known as Advisory Councils. These councils retained a conspicuous colonial air and did not represent their clients or a community electorate: "The Advisory Council was thus a small clique of the traditional colonial powers in the community. All members saw themselves primarily responsible to agencies and interests outside of the community" (Bean, 1977:131). Rather than bringing decision-making powers closer to the majority of community residents, these bodies promulgated colonial administration on a local scale and engendered suspicion and racism (Brody, 1975; Puxley, 1977:104).

Throughout much of the period of northern political development prior to the mid-1960s, most decisions affecting the lives of community residents were made by the local Advisory Council, or continued to be made by Ottawa bureaucrats under the auspices of the Commissioner and territorial Council or the Indian Affairs Branch. While limited attempts were made to increase the degree of northern involvement in state decision-making during this period, it was not until the release of the influential Carrothers Report in 1966 on the development of government in the Northwest Territories that a modicum of self-determination was afforded northerners, resulting in some significant alterations in the colonial political and administrative model.

3.3.2 1967 to Present - Restructuring the State

The Carrothers Report on northern government recommended the creation of a new state structure at the territorial level, and called for the gradual transfer of limited governing powers from bureaucrats in Ottawa to resident northerners (see Carrothers, 1966). The document did not, however, recommend radical or abrupt change. Even though it advocated the creation of a territorial administration within the boundaries of the Northwest Territories and encouraged the transfer of some decision-making powers to elected northerners, it did so under certain conditions: Ottawa was to retain final say in all northern matters under the terms of the *Northwest Territories Act*, and the development of public government in the Northwest Territories was to proceed in a manner dictated by Ottawa (Bean, 1977: 132,133; Dacks, 1981:106,107).

For example, the transfer of certain jurisdictional responsibilities to the level of the territorial state was made contingent upon the development of local government structures that were based on southern models acceptable to Ottawa. These conditions were agreeable to the territorial administration, and two decades later, almost without exception, local government in the Northwest Territories continues to be based on southern models. Settlement councils tend to be viewed from within the territorial bureaucracy as administrative units -- not as truly representative elected bodies -- and principally are afforded responsibility for hard services such as water and sewage services and garbage pick-up (Bean, 1977:130-136; Dacks, 1981:106).[7]

In keeping with the recommendations of the Carrothers Report, a territorial administration was established in Yellowknife in 1967. Through the late 1960s and 1970s, the territorial Council became more representative of the northern electorate -- by 1975, all members were elected -- and it was increasingly supported by a growing, resident bureaucracy, although it should be noted that many once-federal bureaucrats simply continued their duties under the new administration, becoming territorial employees (Dacks, 1981:92). During the 1980s the territorial administration continued to accept more province-like responsibilities from Ottawa such as those governing health, renewable resources and energy. (An enabling agreement for the Northern Energy Accord, stating the terms and conditions governing the transfer of energy responsibilities to the territorial state, was signed in 1988.) While the territorial administration of 1990 may resemble a provincial government in many respects, there remain two fundamental differences which set it apart from its southern counterparts.

First, legal and constitutional authority for all matters of governance remain vested in the federal state, even though the powers of the Commissioner have waned with the growth of the elected territorial Legislative Assembly. This fact was recently witnessed in the lack of direct representation afforded northerners at the constitutional discussions over the Meech Lake Accord. The territorial government trumpets itself as the voice of northern people, yet it remains, in many respects, an arm of colonial administration.

Second, the form of electoral politics employed in the North is unlike any other in Canada. Commonly referred to under the northern misnomer of consensus government[8], there are no visible party politics in territorial state elections: representatives are elected on the basis of personal platforms. The Executive Council (or Cabinet) is selected by the legislature membership as a whole. This executive body serves as the government in power, with the regular members acting in opposition (even though they outnumber the Executive Council). Executive Council members select the Government Leader from their numbers.

Following an election, it is not until the elected members have selected the Executive Council that the electorate is made aware of any broad platforms or priorities which may emanate from their representatives. Even then, the Executive Council may be comprised of individuals with markedly different values and political agendas. It is also not until after elections that the electorate know if the personal platform of their chosen representative is likely to have any impact on government policy.

In the territorial system, official government policy is established by the Executive Council and not by the Legislative Assembly. Passage of legislation in the Northwest Territories,

on the other hand, requires assent of the effective opposition, resulting in much greater scrutiny of government legislation than faced by even minority governments in southern Canada. Official government policy is therefore the common means of stating government priorities and commitments to the public. Yet, many decisions made by the Executive Council do not take the form of official policy and are passed on to the bureaucracy with no public announcement and without review by the Legislative Assembly.

The lack of party politics and the ensuing mix of political perspectives in evidence within the Executive Council mean that the appointment of ministers to new portfolios can result in the rapid retraction of past policy and the implementation of wholly different policy agendas -- even if such appointments are from within the same Executive Council. Within the territorial administration, central agency officials attempt to keep vigilant watch over line departments and agencies in order to ensure that internal policies are consistent with government objectives. These officials, however, often have a limited degree of executive solidarity to invoke as evidence of broad government direction. The system of territorial electoral politics and administration thus results in a curious melange of policies and political practices.

On one hand the territorial state can be viewed as a fledgling state structure, eager to assert and experiment with its jurisdictional clout -- often without the aid of state-wide strategic planning and often in inconsistent manners. It also can be seen as a colonial state structure that receives devolved powers on terms and conditions set by Ottawa. The latter view interprets territorial state actions as occurring only within parameters set by the central state.

Coincident with the rise of the territorial state in the late 1960s and 1970s, another political phenomenon was taking shape in the North: the mass politicization of northern aboriginal peoples. National aboriginal political organizations were formed to counter a growing grass-roots alienation from the decision-making structures and processes of the day at the community, territorial and national levels, and to press for recognition of aboriginal land claims by the federal state.[9] The politicization of northern aboriginal peoples also gained impetus through the Berger Inquiry, which left northern aboriginal peoples with a sense that their voices really would be heard -- if their demands were loud and unified (Abele, 1987:313-315).

The aboriginal organizations formed at this time remain today, and aboriginal demands continue to be voiced at all levels of the state, both through such organizations and via public government structures. Leaders of some aboriginal organizations, most notably the Dene Nation, consistently and vocally denounce the territorial administration as a foreign institution -- an interim government -- that is sanctioned by Ottawa but not by aboriginal people. Such claims are prompted by a deepening of the state's involvement with the daily lives of individual Natives and their families, but corresponding to this growing intervention is a burgeoning feeling that aboriginal peoples may have some say in state decisions.

Persons of aboriginal descent represent a majority of the population in all but six of 64 Northwest Territories communities (NWT, 1990a), and constitute more than half of the overall population of the Northwest Territories. Fuelled by the politicization of aboriginal northerners, these population majorities are increasingly being translated into greater political representation for aboriginal people in the North. Most members of the Legislative Assembly are now of aboriginal ancestry, and national aboriginal political organizations provide effective and vibrant voices for aboriginal concerns.

Nevertheless, even though inroads have been made and aboriginal peoples of the North have greater access to state decision-makers (and are more frequently becoming such themselves), the territorial state structure remains under the ultimate hand of the colonial interests of Ottawa and influenced to a great extent by bureaucrats, many of whom are steeped in a paternalistic, colonial political culture (see Dacks, 1981:94-98; Abele, 1987:316). This state body, an uncertain amalgam of growing aboriginal representation and colonial anachronism, is increasingly subject to diverse demands from a growing number of competing interests -- demands which are often premised in the overarching quest for community empowerment in a variety of spheres.

Throughout the early phases of development in the North, corporate interests played an obvious and profound role in determining the northern agenda of the federal state. During the fur trade years, state presence and interest in the North was negligible -- corporate interests used northern resources as they saw fit. With increased state involvement in northern issues during this century, the state can be seen as unabashedly serving the interests of capital accumulation -- at least in the period prior to the 1960s -- for if it was present at all, the state encouraged (or sanctioned) unmitigated development on terms largely set by corporate interests.

While some authors (for example, Whittington, 1986) argue that corporate interests continue to exercise undue influence in state decision-making in the North, the northern economic and political environment is more complex than it was in the years prior to the establishment of the territorial state. The exercise of colonial interests is much less overt than in previous decades and the voices of corporate interests are now accompanied by competing demands in the political realm, largely due to the politicization of the aboriginal population of the North. Yet, while fewer state decisions at both the territorial and federal levels can be seen to serve exclusively the interests of capital accumulation, not all voices are heard equally by the state.

Where do the intertwined paths of economic and political development lead northern communities in the 1990s? Northern communities are left with two distinct legacies from previous development trends. Much of northern economic development

has been generated by external interests and has been of limited lasting benefit to northern communities. This has contributed to a dependency that has grown since the days of the fur trade. Northern communities have also been afforded little say in the local expression of political development -- or in decisions affecting local interests -- through the years, in spite of the establishment of local government structures in most communities in the North. Limitations on the extent to which northern communities control their own economic and political destinies have resulted in a collective sense of alienation and powerlessness, but these very sentiments have sown the seeds of an anti-colonial community ground swell. This response is paralleled by the growing literature which promotes community development in the North as a potential means of overcoming the legacy of northern colonial development.

3.4 Northern Community Development

The pernicious effects of dependency and powerlessness are rife in northern communities -- a fact that is well-documented in the academic literature on northern development (see, for example, Berger, 1977; Irwin, 1989; Berry, 1988). The solutions to community problems brought about by these northern realities have tended to generate two broad types of responses.

One response perpetuates colonial domination and promotes the ongoing assimilation of northern aboriginal peoples into Canadian society. It holds that northern communities already have (or soon will have) sufficient say in decisions of local importance through the imposition of southern models of local government, and that territorial state bodies and their centralized planning methods constitute an effective administrative regime. It also holds that major non-renewable resource extraction projects offer the needed economic promise for northern communities, where investment dollars will benefit communities through a trickle down process.[10]

To date, there is little (if any) evidence to support the contention that the importation of this southern approach to development issues will afford lasting benefits to northerners. Indeed, the opposite appears to be the case:

> It is self-deception to believe that large-scale industrial development would end unemployment and underemployment of native people in the North....we have never fully recognized that industrial development has, in itself, contributed to social, economic, and geographic dislocation among native people (Berger, 1977:123).

The effects of past development practices in the North extend far beyond economic matters. The centralized decision-making which has so far characterized colonial rule has led to a destructive period of northern development and, according to Lockhart, "the legacy of this closed administration style of decision-making remains the primary challenge to alternative northern development strategies" (1985:36). Scant change of significance can be expected in the dominant rationale and methods of northern economic development without changing the locus of decision-making authority away from central agents.

The alternative solution to the legacy of dependency and alienation left by past colonial practices is to empower northern communities with the ability to control developments -- both economic and political -- that have bearing on matters of local importance. This alternative usurps colonial power relations and runs counter to the trends in economic and political development prevalent in the North, for it advocates solutions based on seemingly radical principles: the long-term economic health of communities is more important than short-term economic gain of southern and foreign corporate interests, and political decisions which affect communities are best made by the people who must live with the consequences of those decisions -- community members.

The latter response is the approach adopted by advocates of northern community development (Dacks, 1986; Lockhart, 1985, 1987; Rees, 1986; Rees and Hulchanski, 1990; Robinson and Ghostkeeper, 1987). While these authors view northern community development from diverse perspectives, they are uniformly convincing in the contention that community development holds real promise for overcoming the pathologies associated with past development patterns in the North. Importantly, each of these writers acknowledges that the state may have a role to play in northern community development, from the potential for government equity participation in community-owned businesses advocated by Robinson and Ghostkeeper (1987:141) to the principal implication of the Rees and Hulchanski study: "that central government programs such as housing delivery can be devolved to the community level and, in so doing, be supportive of community development" (1990:90).

In this body of literature, community empowerment is held to be a viable means of overcoming the legacy of the relations of power which have shaped the lives of aboriginal northerners. Indeed, these authors contend that the traditional economic and political practices of northern aboriginal peoples may predispose them to engaging in effective community-based development. The proponents of northern community development note, quite rightly, that in spite of the growing dependency and alienation found in the North, the community fabric of aboriginal northerners -- from subsistence pursuits to patterns of sharing and decision-making -- is not wholly eradicated.

Some pivotal questions, however, tend to be left unanswered by these scholars. In promoting the sponsorship of northern community development initiatives by the state, proponents of community development in the North are advocating an approach to development that is anathema to established practice; the decisions and decision-making structures of corporate and state agents involved in northern development are predicated on values which may well conflict with those held by northern communities.

Moreover past development practices may serve economic or political interests that will only reluctantly acquiesce to demands for the adoption of alternative development imperatives, and state agents can be expected to adopt a fundamentally altered approach to development only in response to effective political demands or to stave off conflict. It follows that the potential benefits of community development in the North may not be realized unless community development goals are adopted by the state in response to such demands. Little in the history of northern development would indicate that to alert state agents -- bureaucrats or politicians -- to the promise of community development would prove sufficient for the adoption of meaningful community development objectives in state policy.

Even if the concept of community development is embraced to some extent by state agents in response to social action or community demands, institutional impediments similar to those which militate against its initial adoption may emerge. While not a central theme of his work, Lockhart acknowledges that community development contradicts the dominant rationale of state institutions and, accordingly, state-sponsored community development initiatives may encounter a resurgence of colonial attitudes:

> it is important to note that this alternative development concept has not so far been significantly recognized within the dominant command institutions of our society....an occasional government department has dabbled in the semantics, but only long enough for the forces of orthodoxy to reassert their hegemony (Lockhart, 1987:411).

The existence of institutional impediments, however, need not be seen only as attempts by extant colonial interests to undermine state-sponsored community development efforts. The structure and practices of the state and its agents may also inherently constrain the success of state-sponsored community development initiatives. Whatever their source, institutional impediments to community development are real and must be acknowledged by theorists and practitioners alike if state-sponsored community development is to live up to its promise in the North; we now turn to a case study of northern state-sponsored community development in order to illustrate how some of these institutional impediments may emerge.

4. THE NWTHC AND ITS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT MANDATE

This section provides an account of the establishment -- and subsequent foundering -- of the NWTHC's community development mandate. Following a summary of recent northern housing history and the early years of NWTHC operations, the events which led to the adoption of a community development mandate by the NWTHC are described. The section then concludes by briefly chronicling the demise of the NWTHC's community development focus.

4.1 Early State Involvement in Northern Housing

In the federal state's early initiative to encourage aboriginal northerners to settle in permanent communities in the late 1940s and 1950s, the provision of housing represented one of the benefits that was promised by state officials to northern families. State attempts to live up to this promise, however, were slow in coming and often involved the provision of inappropriate and inadequate housing.

During the 1950s, various designs, materials and construction techniques were employed in ongoing experiments devoted to the development of low-cost housing that would curb disease attributed to unsanitary housing conditions in the North. These efforts were primarily focused above the tree line, where adequate natural building materials that met southern standards were in short supply. The families benefitting from these experiments often lived in cramped accommodations made with plywood, canvas and, in some cases, styrofoam (Nixon, 1987:290-292; Rees and Hulchanski, 1990:15-19).

In the Mackenzie Valley, many families used indigenous building materials -- principally logs -- to provide their own housing in the growing settlements of the 1950s and early 1960s. In the early 1950s, Indian Affairs Branch employees were afforded some latitude in providing assistance to families through the supply of building materials or funds to purchase finishing materials unavailable locally. Houses constructed with the use of such assistance below the tree line came to be known as "welfare housing" (Collard, 1983:8-13). Above the tree line, the label "welfare housing" was used to denote housing provided by the state for "indigent" families wholly unable to provide housing for themselves (Thomas and Thompson, 1972:10).

Following these early experimental and ad hoc state housing initiatives, and as more families were encouraged to leave traditional, land-based subsistence pursuits in the late 1950s and 1960s, state agencies introduced a number of formal housing program initiatives in the North. Commencing in 1959, the Eskimo Housing Loan Fund was established to enable families above the tree line to purchase small (280 square feet), basic structures, lacking indoor plumbing, from the federal government (Thomas and Thompson, 1972:10). Two years later, the territorial Council introduced a program offering second mortgage loans to eligible families in an effort to promote home ownership. The following year, first mortgage loans were provided under the territorial *Low Cost Housing Ordinance* to low income residents who were unable to secure other financing (NWT, 1967:42).

It soon became apparent to state officials that northern housing programs would not prove successful if focused solely on the promotion of home ownership: ninety percent of Inuit families who agreed to purchase houses under the Eskimo Housing Loan Fund Program had fallen behind in payments by 1965, largely due to high unit and heating costs (Thomas and Thompson, 1972:10). In 1965, the Department of Indian Affairs and

Northern Development introduced the Eskimo Rental Housing Program -- a classic example of early Canadian community development under state-sponsorship, replete with an adult education component (to teach Inuit how to live in rental housing), provisions for limited increase in community responsibility at the discretion of state officials and program delivery by outside experts (see Canada, 1965; Thompson, 1969:31-38).

This program offered Inuit clients larger units (still only 700 square feet for a three bedroom unit), for which rents were based on household income. The program was renamed the Northern Rental Housing Program in 1968, and a purchase option was included for eligible households -- the Northern Purchase Housing Program. Both rental and ownership manifestations of the program were made available to aboriginal northerners living below the tree line in 1969 (see Canada, 1968; NWTHC, 1975:10; Thompson, 1969:1,31,32). That same year, the territorial Council adopted identical programs for northern residents who were not Inuit or Treaty Indians and therefore did not fall under the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development administrative purview (NWT 1971:73).

The introduction of rental housing programs in northern communities during the late 1960s resulted in the establishment of local organizations that were charged with administering the new rental housing on behalf of federal interests. Housing associations were formed in all northern settlements where the rental programs were delivered, except in the four municipal centres of Yellowknife, Fort Smith, Hay River and Inuvik, where housing authorities were appointed by the Commissioner to administer public housing projects commencing in 1969 (Thompson, 1969:32,33; NWT, 1971:73). The newly formed housing associations were granted limited responsibilities for maintenance of rental housing, and, provided that the Area Administrator was satisfied with the association's progress through three developmental stages, the association responsibilities were to "eventually include such duties as the collection of rents, the determination of rents, and allocation of houses to new tenants" (Thompson, 1969:33). Twenty five years following the introduction of the rental programs, and despite subsequent state promises for significant community control over housing, this list of housing association responsibilities remains substantially unaltered.

The introduction of formal government housing programs in the North during the 1960s also coincided with the establishment of new state structures at the territorial level. The fledgling territorial administration assumed control over program delivery responsibilities for all northern housing programs in 1969; rental stock in the Mackenzie Valley was transferred to the territorial state that year, and the transfer of federal rental housing in the eastern arctic was completed in 1970. Authority for policy decisions concerning the housing programs directed exclusively at Treaty Indians and Inuit, however, remained vested in the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development for several years. The new territorial Department of Local Government assumed the lead role in program delivery, although responsibilities were soon shared with four other territorial departments and agencies, leading to administrative inefficiencies and confusion (NWT 1972:8).

4.2 The NWTHC and its Early Housing Activities

The dispersal of housing responsibilities within the territorial administration, and the recognition that profound housing problems persisted in the North in spite of significant state intervention, prompted the territorial Council to commission a Task Force on Housing in 1971 "to study, discuss and develop meaningful solutions to this great problem" (see NWT, 1972:1). The two principal recommendations of the Task Force on Housing were that:

1) the responsibility for all housing programs be placed under the control and policy direction of the Government of the Northwest Territories, and

2) a Northwest Territories Housing Corporation be established and headquartered at Yellowknife, to create, co-ordinate and give direction to housing programs based on need, environment and research, so as to make available an adequate standard of housing to all residents of the Northwest Territories (NWT, 1972:4).

In keeping with the Task Force recommendations, the territorial state assumed remaining northern housing policy responsibilities from the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and territorial legislation was enacted in 1972 to create the NWTHC, which commenced formal operations on January 1, 1974.

The NWTHC inherited a state-owned rental housing inventory of 3080 units, which represented the majority of the housing stock in all smaller communities in the North. This inventory included both early housing constructed by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and the rental units built between 1969 and 1974 by the territorial administration. As well, the newly formed NWTHC assumed administrative control over all local housing associations and housing authorities (NWTHC, 1975:4).

The NWTHC also inherited critical housing problems. The first needs survey conducted by the NWTHC in 1974 indicated that unparalleled housing construction was needed to overcome the existing housing problems: it was estimated that 2000 rental housing units were immediately required, 800 of which were needed to replace substandard houses and 1200 of which were required to relieve overcrowding. Household formation rates indicated that an additional 1000 housing units would be needed in the first five years of operation. In all, a target of 3000 new public rental units was established for this five year period (NWTHC, 1975:4,5). Initial construction forecasts proved optimistic and actual construction during the next fifteen years

fell far short of levels required to alleviate the acute housing needs.[11]

Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, the NWTHC broadened the housing program options it offered to northern residents. Home ownership assistance efforts were extended beyond the first and second mortgage loans offered since the early 1960s, and were targeted primarily to households below the tree line. This support included the gradual expansion of one-time limited grants to offset the costs of log house construction, initially under the Country Home Assistance Grant Program (first offered to northern residents in 1973), and then under the Small Settlement Home Assistance Grant between 1977 and 1983. In 1983, the program underwent major changes and was renamed the Homeownership Assistance Program (HAP). Under HAP, eligible clients were offered a materials package, the value of which was forgiven over a five year period. Client "sweat equity" remained an important program component, as responsibility for construction was assumed by the client (NWTHC, 1983:5; Rees and Hulchanski, 1990:21-25). In response to community demands, initial experiments with "block-funding" of HAP were undertaken in the early 1980s. Pioneered by the community of Fort Good Hope in the Mackenzie Valley, block-funding allows communities to assume greater responsibility for the design, materials acquisition and construction of ownership units in a comprehensive program package.[12]

Public rental housing construction continued during the 1970s and 1980s under new legislative vehicles. In its first year of operation, the NWTHC began cost-sharing the construction of public housing with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC -- then Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation) through repayable loans provided under Section 43 of the *National Housing Act*. Operation of this housing was subsidized under Section 44 of the federal housing legislation. Commencing in 1980, Section 40 funds were used to finance new public housing construction, with CMHC providing 75% of capital and operating costs. Ongoing repairs to the deteriorating, older rental stock were performed with the use of a variety of program instruments during the 1970s and 1980s.

In spite of the fact that the NWTHC had become the principal player in northern housing and even though significant public funds were allotted to the NWTHC for the provision of both ownership and rental housing to northern residents in the late 1970s and early 1980s, acute housing problems remained and continued to be the subject of deliberation in various public forums. During this period, however, a new element was introduced into the ongoing debate over northern housing problems. The politicization of the northern aboriginal population had gradually extended into the realm of housing and increasing demands were placed on the NWTHC to abandon its mode of centralized control over housing program delivery and administration.

These demands led, in part, to a review of northern housing policy development and program delivery in 1979 -- the Joint Task Force on Northern Housing Policy (see NWTHC, 1979). The Task Force stated that its first objective was to "implement community planning and housing policy development mechanisms that involve northern residents," and its recommendations included provisions to ensure increased public participation in housing policy development. One manifestation of this objective was the subsequent creation of district housing federations, which were formed to enable participants from local housing associations and authorities to band together in order to discuss matters of common concern and to provide forums for articulating such concerns (NWT, 1985a:31).

Ultimately, these organizations were to have little impact on northern housing policy. NWTHC officials continued to respond to demands for community involvement with pledges, but little in the way of action. Speaking to participants at a Baffin Regional Housing Federation conference in Pangnirtung in 1980, the NWTHC Managing Director stated:

> We're encouraging local people to take more and more control over their own housing. Our goal is that within three years, housing will be turned over to the native people through their local housing associations and through the district housing federations....While our two main objectives of building and managing your houses won't change, the responsibilities and the power will shift from the Corporation to you....Our Board of Directors is encouraged by your desire to take over the responsibilities for all matters of housing....we have agreed with you that this turnover of power to you is to be done aggressively and orderly in your own time. So the timing of this transfer of power will be progressive stage by stage until such time as it is totally in your hands (NWTHC, 1980:12-14).

These and other promises for community empowerment in northern housing issues were not kept. In fact, key personnel changes in the NWTHC bureaucracy in 1981, coinciding with a concerted effort by the territorial administration to control the form and pace of local development, led to a renewed centralization of authority and "the direction of the Corporation shifted away from a community development approach" (NWT, 1985a:32). Such action did not, of course, quell demands for more community control over the process of housing policy development and program delivery in the Northwest Territories.

4.3 The Special Committee on Housing

In recognition of the fact that ten years following the creation of the NWTHC housing problems remained and were increasingly the focus of demands for state action, the Northwest Territories Tenth Legislative Assembly commissioned a Special Committee on Housing in 1984. The Special Committee was given a mandate to "inquire into current problems and public concern about housing in the Northwest Territories" and was

authorized to "examine all matters that are under the authority of the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation" (NWT, 1985a:iv).

During the course of the following year, the Special Committee on Housing conducted a thorough review of all northern housing issues. The Committee held public meetings in over forty communities in the North in order to determine the nature of the demands and concerns about housing expressed by northern residents. It engaged in extensive research and consulted with representatives of numerous government agencies involved in northern housing. The Special Committee produced a comprehensive report of its findings and made 82 specific recommendations to improve housing in the North (NWT, 1985a).

The Special Committee's sweeping recommendations covered the gamut of northern housing issues: rental programs; home ownership programs; maintenance and repair programs; staff housing; social assistance; planning and development of communities; training; economic development; and the NWTHC and its operations. The recommendations ranged from suggestions for minor program adjustments to advocating broad changes in the NWTHC's approach to housing delivery.

The overarching theme in the Special Committee's work was that while improvements were needed in the actual houses supplied by the state and in the programs through which housing was delivered, a more fundamental change was required. This change involved the decentralization of decision-making authority away from the NWTHC to communities:

> Early in the course of travelling to the communities, it became obvious that in the NWT, the issue of housing is inextricably linked to the issue of community development....Throughout the work of the Special Committee it has been noted that progress towards community development is directly linked to community control over program delivery. In most communities, local leaders are often the last to know the plans of government; yet, they are the people who are saddled with resulting problems (NWT, 1985a:1,2).

The Special Committee provided an effective and sympathetic forum in which northerners voiced their concerns over housing and the way in which housing programs were being delivered in the Northwest Territories. It also recommended that the NWTHC and other state agencies and departments should abandon attempts to maintain power within the central bureaucracy. Given the nature of the Special Committee's recommendations, it is perhaps not surprising that the Minister Responsible for the NWTHC and the Board of Directors declined to comment on the Committee's Interim Report as requested. The NWTHC also refused to supply the Special Committee with its five year capital plan during the Committee's investigations (see NWT, 1985a:16).

In providing direction for the adoption of community development objectives, the Special Committee challenged the predominant, centralized development practices which had continued since the early days of direct federal control over northern housing issues, and it brought into question the enduring development models characteristic of the colonial era. Indeed, the Special Committee even suggested that a truly northern approach to community development would be required for the success of future community-based decision-making:

> The recommendations in the Final Report attempt to give direction to make government more responsive to the needs of the people. Overall it is the view of the Committee that solutions rest not only in making government work. It is also believed that government works best when it allows decision making to be based in the communities as much as possible. Yet, community development in the NWT, like housing, is based on southern models that are not entirely appropriate (NWT, 1985a:3).

The recommendations of the Special Committee on Housing were submitted to the Legislative Assembly in a Final Report in June of 1985. Included were provisions to ensure that all recommendations which necessitated action by the NWTHC would receive prompt attention, and obligations were placed on the Executive Council and NWTHC to demonstrate progress to the Legislative Assembly. The NWTHC was thus formally charged with the task of implementing profound change in its approach to northern housing issues and the people it served.

4.4 The Institutionalization of Community Development

Responsibility for coordinating the overall government response to the Special Committee's recommendations was given to the Minister Responsible for the NWTHC. In the autumn of 1985, the first stage of this task was heralded with the release of the document, *A New Era in Housing: Planning Together for the Future* (NWT, 1985b). It provides a schematic outline of how the Government of the Northwest Territories intended to approach the Special Committee's suggested directions.[13] The document divides the recommendations into two types: those which could be accommodated in the short-term through the actions of specific departments or agencies, and those which required more elaborate, and consequently long-term, solutions. One of the more protracted strategies involved the development of a Corporate Plan and Strategy by the NWTHC, in which the Corporation was to conduct "a complete review of its present mission, program and operation, determine its priorities, and develop a plan and strategy for the future" (NWT, 1985b:i).

4.4.1 The Corporate Planning Project

One month following the announcement of the government plan, the NWTHC released the Terms of Reference for the development of its Corporate Plan and Strategy. While the

summary document acknowledges that the "public is demanding changes and a rapid improvement in the present situation," it estimated that the assessment, development, and implementation phases of the Corporate Planning Project, along with subsequent training, would last nearly two years (NWTHC, 1985:1, 6-8). The Project Steering Committee was comprised of the Minister Responsible for the NWTHC, the Chairperson of the Board of Directors, and senior NWTHC bureaucrats. A Project Team conducted research and provided analysis and recommendations to the Steering Committee (NWTHC, 1987a:1). The Corporate Planning Project was to examine all facets of the NWTHC and its operations, and was to produce a document which would "outline the Corporation's priorities and indicate where it wants to go over the longer term and how it intends to get there" (NWTHC, 1985:4).

At the outset of the work of the Corporate Planning Project, a new Minister was placed in charge of the housing portfolio and, soon after, a new President was appointed to the NWTHC. As members of the Corporate Planning Project Steering Committee, both of these individuals were committed to implementing the new direction for the NWTHC proposed by the Project Team and both supported its major recommendations for change. The Corporate Planning Project did result in a thorough review of NWTHC operations, and two significant volumes of background papers, findings and recommendations were produced by the Project Team in the summer of 1986 (NWTHC, 1986b, 1986c). In September of 1986, the Steering Committee approved the Corporate Plan and Strategy (NWTHC, 1987a:1).

The adopted Corporate Plan and Strategy included a new mission statement for the NWTHC:

> As an agency of the Government of the NWT, the mission of the NWT Housing Corporation is to assist residents of the Northwest Territories, in accordance with need, to secure and maintain adequate, suitable and affordable shelter at a reasonable cost (NWTHC, 1986b).

This mission was to be carried out within a new framework for housing delivery entitled the "New Context." In developing the New Context, the Corporate Planning Team had attempted to distil basic principles from the *Final Report of the Special Committee on Housing* that could be used to guide the NWTHC in its endeavours. Three such principles were identified: the Corporate Plan and Strategy stated that the government of the Northwest Territories and the NWTHC should provide housing services in a manner that promotes 1) community development, 2) economic development, and 3) accountability to communities (NWTHC, 1986b:13). These principles came to represent both the criteria by which the NWTHC assessed its activities and the cornerstones of the NWTHC's new approach to housing. While community development was not defined by the Special Committee on Housing, the NWTHC's Corporate Planning Team adopted the following unwieldy definition:

> That process or combination of processes, which enables a community to acquire skills and resources, invest them in its corporate membership, and develop them, in a manner that will facilitate the analysis of community problems and the implementation of solutions, which respond to the community's own political, cultural, social, economic and environmental requirements (NWTHC, 1986b:15).

The Corporate Plan and Strategy identified nine specific issues that were deemed to be of fundamental importance to the future of the NWTHC, all of which related to deficiencies in the NWTHC's operating environment or approach. Included were recommendations intended to improve the NWTHC's policy framework, management systems and organization. One set of these identified deficiencies focused on the relationships between communities and the NWTHC, and included specific problems such as:

- a lack of strategic policy to guide the NWTHC's relationships with community housing organizations;
- a lack of community development skills amongst NWTHC staff; and
- a lack of adequate planning models and processes which incorporate the participation of local residents.

To rectify these deficiencies, the Corporate Plan and Strategy included a recommendation that "the Housing Corporation, in cooperation with the local housing organizations, create a development strategy for the delivery of housing services" (NWTHC, 1986b:78,79,87).

While the development strategy was intended to provide the NWTHC with the principal blueprint for its new relationships with communities, it was recognized that many immediate changes were required to institutionalize the New Context of housing delivery and to respond to the recommendations of both the Special Committee on Housing and the Corporate Planning Project. Some of these changes proceeded abreast of work on the development strategy; included were initiatives such as program evaluations and modifications, solicitations for community input on housing design, increasing community involvement in the housing allocation process, providing more block-funding to communities for the local delivery of HAP and devising mechanisms to strengthen the participation of northern businesses in Corporation activities and increase the use of northern labour employed on NWTHC projects (NWTHC, 1987a, 1987b, 1988b). Each of these discrete initiatives was intended to contribute to one or more of the New Context principles of community development, economic development and accountability to communities.

4.4.2 The Community Development Strategy

The development strategy recommended by the Corporate Planning Project was labelled the Community Development

Strategy by NWTHC management, and preliminary work on its design and content began shortly after approval of the Corporate Plan and Strategy in 1986 (NWTHC, 1987a:8). Public commitments to prepare the Community Development Strategy were frequently offered by ministers and NWTHC bureaucrats in 1987 and 1988 as evidence that the NWTHC was indeed changing its overall approach to housing delivery -- specific initiatives which supported the New Context were held to be mere harbingers of the empowerment to come. Ministers spoke of the impending Community Development Strategy in the Legislature each year, and almost all public documents released by the NWTHC in this period referenced the Community Development Strategy and the promise it was to offer communities. The most significant public statement of the NWTHC's new approach to housing during these years, *Building Houses, Communities and Our Future*, described the NWTHC's community development efforts and the Community Development Strategy in the following manner:

> Community residents must be able to take part effectively in making decisions about housing, in defining their community's problems and in coming up with solutions to those problems....The Housing Corporation's new Community Development Strategy will let communities decide who will be in charge of housing....Providing these choices to communities symbolizes the changes within the Corporation and the new way in which housing services are being provided to the people of the North -- in partnership with communities, with the aim of building community development, economic development and mutual accountability (NWTHC, 1987b:21,22).

Coincident with the growing public commitment to provide northern residents with the Community Development Strategy, the pace of efforts on the project increased following the creation of a NWTHC Policy and Evaluation Division in the spring of 1987. Itself a product of the recommendations of the Special Committee on Housing and the Corporate Planning Project, the newly formed Division was charged with coordinating the formulation of the initial policy component of the Community Development Strategy.

The project was to be developed in three distinct phases:

1) A policy statement, including a detailed list of community development principles and a range of potential local institutions that could represent communities in new partnerships with the NWTHC, was to be developed in full consultation with communities. It was recognized that in order for the Community Development Strategy to constitute a true community development initiative, communities themselves would need to play the fundamental role in defining community development, its local expression and the overall strategy.

2) Based on the community development policy statement, programs were to be reviewed for compliance with the community development principles and modified where necessary, and community development training needs for both NWTHC and local housing organization personnel were to be identified.

3) An implementation phase was to follow, during which new relationships based on community development principles would be institutionalized and communities would be empowered to take control over housing.

Internal development of the community development policy statement progressed slowly. A series of internal discussion papers were prepared during 1987 and 1988 in order to attain corporate agreement on the scope of the project and to identify where responsibilities should rest for completion of the tasks required to fully develop and implement the strategy. Workshops and meetings were held in Yellowknife and with NWTHC field staff in order to develop a corporate consensus on community development and to discuss both the possibilities and limitations faced by the Corporation and communities in forging a new distribution of power. Determination of which organizations or individuals were to represent communities was subject to lengthy deliberation; it was decided that this responsibility was to rest with communities (in spite of the local strife this might cause), within limits set by the territorial administration and CMHC.

Internal consensus on the merits and methods of a community development approach to northern housing proved to be an elusive goal. NWTHC officials were being asked to question past practice (and even their own motives), and to hand over power to community organizations which had hitherto been largely subservient to bureaucratic power and whim. Pockets of bureaucratic resistance persisted, although during the early days of the New Context few dissenting officials openly took issue with the prevailing community development course.

The development of an internal consensus and direction was further hampered by ongoing leadership changes both at the political level and in the bureaucracy. Between late 1987 and the autumn of 1988, four different Executive Council members assumed the housing portfolio in five separate appointments. Interest and involvement in the Community Development Strategy was not forthcoming from any of the new ministers, and during late 1987 and early 1988 the continued formulation of the Community Development Strategy was fuelled exclusively by momentum within the bureaucracy. This momentum resulted, in part, in the adoption of a new Corporate goal on community development, economic development and accountability which accompanied the NWTHC's mandate statement and which was approved by the Executive Council in 1988 (see NWT, 1989a). This bureaucratic momentum, however, could not be maintained; the summer of 1988 saw the beginning of a series of changes in key personnel in the NWTHC bureaucracy, commencing with the departure of the President who had actively encouraged NWTHC officials to

embrace a community development mandate since the work of the Corporate Planning Project.

While internal NWTHC deliberations over community development were taking place in the spring and summer of 1988, negotiations were also being conducted with officials from CMHC. These negotiations were required because the range of community institutions which were being contemplated as potential loci for community control over northern housing extended beyond that which the NWTHC's federal funding partner had historically sanctioned.[14] Federal officials sought to limit the scope of any new relationships between the NWTHC and northern communities by claiming that certain community organizations should not be involved in the administration of cost-shared rental housing programs. Elected community governments were among the local organizations that CMHC wished to preclude from full partnerships with the NWTHC, owing to the perceived potential for political interference in rental housing allocation. Discussion papers were used to frame negotiations on the matter, and a series of meetings were held between officials of the two agencies.

CMHC's reluctance to involve elected local governments in the administration of rental housing was contrasted by the disparate stance of the territorial state on the development of the NWTHC Community Development Strategy and on the proposed new relationships between the NWTHC and communities. Following the appointment of a new Executive Council after the territorial election in the autumn of 1987, territorial departments and agencies were strongly encouraged to focus all transfers of authority exclusively on community governments. The new Executive Council's first comprehensive public announcement of its strategic approach, *Direction for the 1990s* (NWT, 1988a), included the following statement:

> As prime public bodies, community governments will gradually absorb most Government of the NWT sponsored community bodies and territorial government programs transferred to the local level. A new policy will identify community governments as the primary target for the transfer of government programs (NWT, 1988a).

The document declared that the existence of myriad local organizations -- many of which were not created by the territorial administration -- had "reduced the effectiveness and control of elected community councils, placed overwhelming burdens on individual community leaders, and made the process of governing the NWT more difficult and less efficient." The very existence of local structures not under territorial purview was attributed, in turn, to the practices of "consensus decision-making and public participation and consultation," providing forewarning of the Executive Council's intent to adopt models of centralized planning and control. A series of public statements followed which promised the development of the Prime Public Authority initiative -- the central territorial administration's version of community development. The initiative was to outline responsibilities that might be transferred to local governments. In spite of these announcements, details of the initiative were never publicly released.

A parallel expression of the territorial administration's development focus on local governments was released soon after the new Executive Council came to power; the policy cited in the *Direction for the 1990s* document was tabled in the Legislature on March 7, 1988. The GNWT Transfer Policy (NWT, 1988b) outlines a detailed set of processes and conditions for the transfer of program authority to the local and regional levels. Under the terms of the policy, limited program transfers to regional bodies or to community organizations other than settlement or municipal councils are possible, but largely discouraged.

The NWTHC found itself on precarious middle ground between the federal state's desire to exclude local governments from housing matters and the territorial administration's desire to see community governments assume any and all local program responsibilities. The draft policy component of the NWTHC's Community Development Strategy was based, in large part, on the principle of community choice -- the NWTHC had attempted to anticipate partnerships with a broad range of community institutions, including local governments. Nevertheless, the NWTHC broadened the scope of the draft policy statement during the spring of 1988 in order to afford community governments every opportunity to participate in housing program delivery and administration. Community choice, however, remained a guiding principle in the NWTHC's approach; it was reluctant to dismantle well-organized and representative community groups in order to foist local housing responsibilities upon unwilling community governments. Ongoing (but inconclusive) discussions with officials of the territorial Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, purveyors of the Prime Public Authority initiative, were held in attempts to assure the territorial administration that the NWTHC's Community Development Strategy need not conflict with government direction. In the summer of 1988, responsibility for the design and implementation of the Prime Public Authority effort was removed from the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs and was vested in a small committee of senior bureaucrats, including officials from the Department of the Executive -- the core body of the territorial administration -- central agency officials and the new President of the NWTHC.

In the culmination of successful negotiations in July of 1988, the NWTHC obtained CMHC's qualified endorsement of its intention to establish new relationships with communities that would see the transfer of significant power to local institutions, including community governments. Upon gaining sanction from CMHC and after the final drafting of a community consultation paper which outlined the draft community development principles and range of community institutions (including community governments) which could provide the local focus for the transfer of authority over housing matters to communities, the NWTHC announced its intention to engage in

broad consultations with northern communities on the promised Community Development Strategy in the early autumn of 1988.

This announcement, however, proved to be the knell of the Community Development Strategy, for it resulted in swift action on the part of the territorial administration to prevent consultations between the NWTHC and northern communities. Territorial officials in charge of the Prime Public Authority initiative instructed the NWTHC to fall in line with the territorial administration's design for local authorities and insisted that consultations on the Community Development Strategy be folded in with a future government-wide implementation plan for the Prime Public Authority concept. The powers in charge of the NWTHC chose to acquiesce without protest, and, in spite of public commitments to release the Community Development Strategy, the project was shelved; no documents on the Community Development Strategy were ever released to the public and northern communities were never afforded the opportunity to take part in the design of a comprehensive community empowerment strategy.

4.5 The Demise of Community Development

Between late 1988 and the summer of 1990, the NWTHC's broad community development focus became increasingly vague and the incidence of identifiable community development activities waned steadily. Isolated actions rooted in the NWTHC's community development mandate were still in evidence, but these were increasingly the initiatives of individuals rather than planned corporate endeavours. Such actions took place in a policy void, frequently without the active consent of the Minister or senior NWTHC officials. The periodic efforts of some officials to revive the process through which the Community Development Strategy was to be developed were wholly unsuccessful and, as the current Minister and President began to implement their own mark on the Corporation after 1988, these efforts subsided.

The NWTHC's activities remained based on a system of centralized planning and authority. The Corporation continued to focus on the three main program thrusts of the 1970s and early 1980s -- home ownership, rental and repair programs -- and additional block-funding agreements were reached with a small number of communities.[15] A gradual shift in Corporate emphasis took place between 1988 and 1990, characterized by a decreasing consideration of long-range planning and an increasing focus on matters of immediate concern, such as fine-tuning the specific administrative details of programs and dealing with complaints from individual clients. In the words of one NWTHC official:

> The powers in charge of the Corporation still care about communities, but some of them would rather work through solving short term problems and providing daily hand-outs than long term plans like the Community Development Strategy (Personal Interview).

Occasional activities aimed at fostering economic development were sponsored by the Corporation after 1988. Among these were rental housing construction demonstration projects conducted in two communities during the 1989-90 fiscal year, in which the NWTHC entered into contracts with community interests for the construction of rental housing when the public tendering process yielded bids in excess of cost projections (NWT, 1990b:518,519). The motivation for these projects appears to have stemmed more from fiscal concern than community development principles. As well, the Minister and senior staff sought to demonstrate NWTHC support for the Executive Council's goal of territorial economic development. According to one Corporation official:

> The only stabs at community development that we have been able to operationalize are a few economic development projects, and the only reason we've had some success in them is because economic development is a major priority of the Executive Council. If the politicians weren't pushing economic development we wouldn't even be trying the demo projects (Personal Interview).

The Community Development Strategy, once so prominently lauded by politicians and senior bureaucrats, was seldom mentioned in public presentations or documents after 1988. Passing references to community development continued to be made by the Minister and senior officials, but these comments rang hollow in the absence of concrete initiatives to demonstrate their conviction. Reference to the Community Development Strategy was dropped from the summary of the NWTHC's major objectives in the government Main Estimates document for 1990-91 (see NWT, 1990c), and for the first time following the work of the Corporate Planning Project, the Community Development Strategy was not mentioned in the Minister's summary of impending NWTHC projects in the address to the 1990 Budget Session of the Legislative Assembly. In the words of one senior NWTHC official:

> The Community Development Strategy is dead. The government told us to back off on community development and then the Minister and President scuttled it completely. We really did have a community development focus for a few years, but no longer. Community development is simply not an issue now (Personal Interview).

5. THE INSTITUTIONAL IMPEDIMENTS TO STATE-SPONSORED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN THE NORTH

The demise of the NWTHC's community development efforts is attributable to the effects of three institutional impediments to northern state-sponsored community development: limits on the independent actions of state agencies, shifting political priorities and bureaucratic change and intransigence. The impediments are identified and briefly discussed concluding with an assessment of how these impediments might be overcome.

5.1 Limits on Independent Actions of State Agencies

The NWTHC is an agency of the territorial state. As such, it is held accountable to the Northwest Territories Executive Council and to the Legislative Assembly for its actions and for allotted public funds. Like other state agencies and departments, the NWTHC does not exercise its mandate in isolation from the government of the day and its overall agenda -- the manner in which the NWTHC delivers its housing programs and services is governed by the imperatives of the Executive Council in power.

The mandate of the NWTHC focuses on one sector or jurisdictional area -- the provision of housing assistance to northern residents who are unable to acquire suitable and adequate shelter within their means. Accordingly, there also exist practical limitations on the scope of its actions. Like any state agency or department, the NWTHC cannot independently implement plans or strategies that impinge upon the jurisdictions of other state entities. Such practical limitations, however, played a limited role in the demise of the Community Development Strategy.

The community development mandate given to the NWTHC by the Tenth Legislative Assembly was a radical agenda for change. It reflected at least a temporary willingness within some factions of the territorial state apparatus to bow to community demands for more power. Moreover, under the terms of the draft policy statement on community development prepared by the NWTHC, the final expression of this mandate was ultimately to be determined by communities. Communities were to be empowered with authority over housing matters only within limits set by accountability and community aspirations. This approach invited the recalcitrance of established forces within the territorial state.

Following the appointment of a new Executive Council after the territorial election in the autumn of 1987, NWTHC officials continued to develop plans in accordance with a community development focus. Yet, support for this direction was withdrawn as the new Executive Council formulated its overall political strategy and its plans for local development. Politicians and senior bureaucrats in the territorial administration were wary of the precedent that would be set through the implementation of the Community Development Strategy and feared that their new design for the limited transfer of authority to local governments could be compromised by the NWTHC's community development endeavours.

Some of this reluctance can be attributed to a new mix of political agendas within the current Executive Council, but there is another factor that accounts for the withdrawal of Executive Council support for the NWTHC's brand of community development: the resurgence of bureaucratic "rationality" in the territorial state, principally emanating from central agencies, in the face of declining political commitment to alternative modes of development. Policy advice originating in these agencies is decidedly against the meaningful empowerment of communities. Products of such advice can be seen in the GNWT Transfer Policy and in public statements on the Prime Public Authority initiative (see NWT, 1988a). The central bureaucracy was the driving force behind both efforts, and an overt objective of these instruments is the rationalization of local authorities in a framework established not by communities but by the territorial state. This policy stance reflects three underlying tenets which are increasingly in evidence in the territorial state apparatus: 1) that strong, centralized planning is vital for the implementation of the territorial state agenda; 2) that state activities should be rationalized, and cost-effectiveness should be the principal criterion by which state actions are judged; and, 3) further devolution of powers from the federal state to the territorial state may be jeopardized if communities gain powers under a framework not established solely by the territorial administration. The scope, form and intended product of the NWTHC's Community Development Strategy ran counter to each of these principles.

5.1.1 Centralized Planning

The current territorial administration's approach to development issues is characterized by centralized planning and control of mega-policy initiatives. Departments and agencies are impelled to develop programs and activities that complement and contribute to grand policy strategies designed by the centre. Again, examples of this approach are found in the development of the GNWT Transfer Policy and the Prime Public Authority initiative, as well as the recently completed territorial Economic Development Strategy (see NWT, 1990d). In part, support was withdrawn from the NWTHC's community development efforts and the Corporation's decentralized approach to development because they were seen to challenge the methods and principles of policy development predominant in the territorial state. As well, concern was expressed by senior territorial officials that the NWTHC's efforts could result in the conveyance of conflicting messages to communities -- messages that might raise community expectations for empowerment beyond the level which the new territorial administration was willing to entertain.

Under the present administration, central agencies play a greater role as bureaucratic gate-keepers than in previous territorial administrations. These institutions exert considerable control over the issues on the agenda of the Executive Council by gauging the political importance of competing sectoral interests and by determining how these might develop into political issues or crises. In the eyes of central agency bureaucrats, housing issues did not hold the potential for major conflict and other issues of importance were already deemed to be crowding the new Executive Council's plate in late 1987 and 1988. To an extent, central agency officials were correct in the assertion that housing issues did not present a major political problem for the new Executive Council. Since the work of the Special

Committee on Housing, community demands for more control over housing had waned.[16]

5.1.2 Rationalization of State Activities

Concerns were expressed by the central bureaucracy that the implementation of the Community Development Strategy could lead to inefficiencies and increased community demands for funding. In part, it was concerns such as these that led to the development of the GNWT Transfer Policy, which was intended to reduce duplications of services and funding at the local level. NWTHC officials recognized that their community development efforts could possibly lead to higher costs, especially immediately following the implementation of the Community Development Strategy, but felt that the political objective of community development overrode the bureaucratic quest for cost-effectiveness.[17] The political will to implement the Community Development Strategy may have been present in the previous administration, but not under the current Executive Council. This fact was recognized within the NWTHC bureaucracy. According to one NWTHC official:

> If the Housing Corporation works on community development its going to cost more and it might detract from our main focus of building houses. We won't get the support to do this unless community development is a priority for the entire government, which is obviously not the case (Personal Interview).

5.1.3 Jurisdictional Concerns

After more than 20 years of devolution of authority from Ottawa, the territorial administration remains in many respects an arm of the federal state, and it continues to obtain additional powers on terms and conditions set by Ottawa. Speeding the devolution of powers from the federal state is a fundamental priority of the current territorial administration, as is its quest to assert its competence and legitimacy as the primary public government structure in the North (see NWT, 1988a). Uncertainties plague the territorial state in this endeavour; new public government structures are being proposed through the land claims process in both the Mackenzie Valley and Nunavut (the territory covered by the Inuit land claim), northern aboriginal nations are declaring their own right to represent aboriginal people in governing structures and numerous regional and tribal organizations are asserting their right to exercise power in a variety of settings. In the face of these uncertainties, the current Executive Council moved quickly and preemptively to consolidate its control over northern development matters after it gained power in 1987. One of the main thrusts of this strategy focused on the local level, where community government models designed and controlled by the central territorial administration were championed as the vehicles for future local development.

In 1990, almost three years into its mandate, the Executive Council is less zealously advocating its single-minded approach to local development issues and the territorial administration appears uncertain about its stance on local government. The Prime Public Authority initiative, originally planned for implementation in late 1988, languished within the territorial administration and a formal expression of the initiative was never presented to northern communities. In 1989 the concept was renamed the Community-Self Government initiative in an empty attempt to appease representatives of aboriginal organizations, who justifiably saw the push for Prime Public Authorities as an effort to preclude their direct involvement in establishing the parameters of future local development. Under its new label, the initiative has not moved ahead.

In part, the downfall of the Prime Public Authority initiative can be attributed to bureaucratic infighting, for representatives of individual departments and agencies feared that centralization of development activities would mean a loss of control over the delivery of their programs and services. The demise of the initiative can also be attributed to a growing recognition amongst members of the Executive Council that a preemptive attempt to control local development would result in significant political opposition from community bodies and aboriginal organizations.

The shelving of the Prime Public Authority initiative, however, has not breathed new life into the NWTHC's Community Development Strategy. According to one Corporation official, the Executive Council found itself grappling with the same issues of community representation that slowed the internal development of the NWTHC's draft policy statement on community development:

> The Community Development Strategy is not going anywhere because the politicians can't decide who should represent communities. They're afraid to let communities decide, but they won't make the decision themselves because they know they will hear a political outcry from all sorts of community groups (Personal Interview).

While impediments to the further development and implementation of the Community Development Strategy persist in the central territorial administration, other institutional factors have contributed to the fact that the Community Development Strategy has not progressed with renewed vigour following the failure of the territorial administration's Prime Public Authority effort. To these we now turn.

5.2 Shifting Political Priorities

All state agencies and departments must adapt to the new political realities that attend ministerial change. After an inevitable period of adjustment following portfolio appointments, when ministers familiarize themselves with new responsibilities, newly-appointed political masters begin to place their marks on

the organizations to which they have been assigned. In this respect, the NWTHC and other state agencies and departments in the North experience the same kinds of realignments when ministerial changes occur as do their counterparts in other jurisdictions.

The NWTHC has encountered significant change of this sort in recent years. Since the work of the Special Committee on Housing in 1985, the territorial housing portfolio has been held by five different ministers, all of whom have brought their individual perspectives and interests to bear upon the NWTHC and its activities. Of itself, the frequency of ministerial change inhibited the NWTHC's work on the Community Development Strategy and the other initiatives stemming from the work of the Corporate Planning Project; each new Minister spent a period of months becoming conversant with housing issues and with the NWTHC's plans, methods and programs. As well, the NWTHC bureaucracy had to adjust to the individual styles of these new ministers and their particular needs for information and advice.

There has been a marked propensity displayed by recent NWTHC ministers to focus on the housing problems of individual clients and constituents to the detriment of broad policy matters and strategic planning initiatives such as the Community Development Strategy. When such political styles are introduced into an agency or department of the territorial state, the ministerial support needed to pursue strategic initiatives often cannot be invoked and little ameliorative action can be taken by bureaucrats. One NWTHC official characterized these changing propensities in the following way:

> When we adopted a community development mandate, we had ministers who really thought strategically about the future of housing and communities in the North. Recent ministers have viewed the portfolio as a way of giving favours to individuals (Personal Interview).

The impacts of ministerial change upon the NWTHC and its community development focus, however, extend far beyond matters of aligning Corporation practices to suit individual ministerial styles. Indeed, circumstances peculiar to the North mean that the adjustments which accompany ministerial change are often more pronounced than in other jurisdictions. In jurisdictions where party politics are employed in elections, such adjustments are of course most profound upon changes in government. The resulting adoption of entire sets of new political priorities often can have profound impact on the ways in which state agencies are organized and on the programs and services that they deliver. In contrast, agencies and departments of the territorial state often must embrace significant new approaches to their activities following portfolio shuffles within the same Executive Council due to the realities of consensus government.

The absence of overt party politics in the governing apparatus of the territorial state means that members of the Executive Council inevitably hold diverse philosophical views and seek to implement different political agendas. It also means that a succession of ministers in one portfolio can result in a disruptive lack of continuity.[18] While some ministers attempt to promote Executive Council solidarity (particularly those individuals who share the political proclivities of the Government Leader, the rough equivalent of a premier in provincial jurisdictions), others are more prone to openly espouse their own policy agendas and objectives. This reality is countered by the growing role played by central agencies within the territorial administration. Indeed, it is likely that the current Government Leader has sought to strengthen central agencies in an effort to regularize the activities of departments and agencies that are directed by political masters holding disparate views. Nevertheless, given the range of political views in evidence on the Executive Council, the impacts of one new ministerial appointment for a department or agency can be profound, and a series of such appointments even more so.

Ministerial succession and attendant swings in philosophical underpinnings have resulted in ongoing change in the expectations placed upon the NWTHC. One area where this change has been most telling is in the NWTHC's community development focus. The NWTHC's community development mandate was bestowed upon the Corporation and developed by past ministers, and it has not meshed well with the political agendas or styles of recent appointments to the housing portfolio. According to one senior NWTHC official:

> To successfully implement a community development program takes years of political commitment. It was there when we were given our community development mandate, but it no longer is. Seldom have ministers been with the Housing Corporation long enough to familiarize themselves with our community development mandate. Those who've stayed on have had different political agendas (Personal Interview).

Without a strong, committed voice on the Executive Council in support of the Community Development Strategy, the initiative was destined to fail -- particulary given the predominant vision of local development in the current state administration. This needed pro-community development voice was not forthcoming from recent ministers; in fact, some NWTHC officials have noted a marked reversal in ministerial attitudes on community empowerment. In the words of one such official:

> Recently, our ministers have been trying to centralize power in the Corporation. The present Minister may even dissolve the community committees that recommend who should get HAP packages. The recommendation committees don't even have any real power to decide, but the Minister and President get some political flak and its back to Yellowknife with all the decisions (Personal Interview).[19]

The northern system of governance and the corresponding sea changes in political priorities which influence state agencies and

departments have obviously contributed to the demise of the NWTHC's community development focus. Yet, for a full accounting of the institutional impediments to the continued exercise of a community development mandate, we must also look within the NWTHC itself.

5.3 Bureaucratic Change and Intransigence

Like ministers, the personnel who implement state programs and services also change. Indeed, it is often the appointment of new ministers that demands this change, for the implementation of new political priorities is frequently advanced through the efforts of bureaucrats who support new directions. Appointments to senior positions within the bureaucracy are thus employed to change the ways in which state agencies or departments approach their tasks. Such appointments were used to foster the new community development tack of the NWTHC following the work of the Special Committee on Housing, and they also resulted, in part, in the demise of bureaucratic support for the NWTHC's community development mandate.

The integration of a community development focus within the structure of the NWTHC required the full commitment of senior bureaucrats; without this commitment, the NWTHC would not even have made the limited progress that it did in the realm of community development. The NWTHC President who joined the Corporation during the Corporate Planning Project, and who actively encouraged the adoption of a community development ethic at all levels of the NWTHC, departed in the summer of 1988. Soon, committed senior personnel who were brought to the NWTHC by this President to help implement the community development mandate began to leave. The threads of integration within the bureaucracy were quickly unravelled once this process commenced:

> There have been recent changes in the Corporation's senior management committee that have made it hard to carry on with community development. We've lost lots of good people who were really committed to community development in the past few years. They saw the writing on the wall after the new ministers showed up and after some other key staff members left the Corporation (Personal Interview).

The flagging bureaucratic momentum which carried the NWTHC's community development focus through the succession of housing ministers in 1988 could not be maintained following the departure of some of the vocal community development proponents. This loss of momentum can also be attributed to the impact of two other important factors that attended ministerial and bureaucratic change. One of these factors was the loss of a strategic planning capacity in the NWTHC. The styles of new senior bureaucrats, like recent ministers, were more conducive to reactive management, and led to a growing emphasis on short term solutions to client problems; there remained little interest in developing long term solutions -- such as the Community Development Strategy -- to northern housing problems. The second, more telling, factor was the loss of commitment to community development within the senior bureaucracy:

> Changes in key personnel have contributed to the downfall of community development in the Corporation. People are afraid to promote community development now because they just don't feel the management support is there. There are people in the Corporation who really do support community development, but they can't say so openly because some senior people don't believe in it. The people who aren't big on community development are sitting pretty (Personal Interview)

The detractors of the NWTHC's community development mandate did not, however, solely spring from within the ranks of the new wave of senior management. The same factions within the Corporation that slowed the development of a corporate consensus on community development during the policy phase of the Community Development Strategy reasserted their intransigence under cover of the new ministerial and management regimes.[20]

The attitudes held by most staff who did not support community development during and after the time of the Corporate Planning Project are steeped in paternalism, yet seldom are such perspectives laid bare. Some of these attitudes and concerns were couched in terms of administrative efficiency, for the resurgent culture of paternalism within the NWTHC bureaucracy finds solace and legitimacy in rational justification. As one NWTHC official sees it:

> Some people in the Corporation have fought against community development because they think it will result in administrative chaos. They think that housing should be delivered through a centralized system. Lots of our staff think its easier to do the work on their own in the short run, rather than help communities learn how to do it (Personal Interview).

This justification may also have its origins in other self-serving motives:

> There are quite a few people in the Corporation who don't support community development at all. They go out of their way to put out a spark of community initiative if one appears, and that's because they recognize that if they promote community development they'll be working themselves out of a job. They've got to justify their existence (Personal Interview).

Given the legacy of colonial domination and paternalism which characterizes the role played by the bureaucracy in the lives of northerners, it is perhaps not surprising that strong anti-community development sentiments persist within the NWTHC bureaucracy. Continuation of this domination -- indeed, of jobs

-- is contingent upon the perpetuation of dependency in its client population. The intransigent attitudes of some NWTHC officials towards community development initiatives merely represent a continuance of the well-established patterns of paternalism in the North.

After the formal adoption of a community development mandate by the NWTHC in the mid-1980s, such attitudes were largely obscured by the commitment and enthusiasm of community development proponents in the Corporation. Within a short time, the imposition of impediments to the independent actions of the NWTHC by the central territorial state, and the new priorities of recent ministers, together created conditions which enabled anti-community development perspectives within the bureaucracy to resurface and reassert themselves in Corporation affairs. It was the dynamic interplay between these three institutional impediments that caused the NWTHC's community development efforts to founder.

5.4 Confronting the Impediments -- Continued Community Demands

In the preceding sections we identified three impediments to state-sponsored community development that contributed to the demise of the NWTHC's community development focus. Each of these impediments -- limits on independent actions of state agencies, shifting political priorities, and bureaucratic change and intransigence -- arose due to particular circumstances, many of which may seem unique to the NWTHC. Upon further scrutiny, however, the factors which undermined the NWTHC's community development mandate are revealed as manifestations of reemergent historical patterns. The centralized planning characteristic of the territorial state, the state-imposed limitations on the manner in which communities obtain power, the use of rational, cost-efficiency arguments to justify why communities cannot have more say in matters that affect them and the culture of paternalism in the bureaucracy all harken to early colonial days when the federal state asserted its presence in the North and began to exert growing control over the lives of northerners.

During the initial stages of colonial development in the North when the federal state and corporate interests opened the northern resource hinterland, little heed was paid to local aspirations. Recent political gains by aboriginal northerners have only resulted from grudging relinquishment of power by distant interests, and, while it is true that northerners are increasingly able to participate in meaningful political debate over territorial matters, the broken promises made to communities by the federal state have been replaced by empty promises made closer to home. The pledge of housing for the aboriginal population in past decades which was used to entice them to move from dispersed camps into permanent settlements, the assurances of the NWTHC Managing Director ten years ago that power over housing would soon be totally in the hands of communities and the recent commitments from ministers and bureaucrats for release of the Community Development Strategy and its blueprint for community empowerment were all broken, but only the former promise was made by Ottawa.

The attitudes and structures which characterize the systems of domination in the North, and which contribute to the impediments to northern state-sponsored community development, have not been rapidly dismantled with the devolution of powers to the territorial state. This is due, in part, to the structure and composition of the territorial bureaucracy and to the territorial political system. In spite of state attempts to raise the percentage of aboriginal northerners working in the territorial bureaucracy, territorial departments and agencies continue to be staffed primarily by non-native southerners, and most aboriginal staff occupy lower-paid positions demanding few skills (see NWT, 1989b). Non-native bureaucrats represent a significant segment of the northern population, and they deliver state programs and services, often from Yellowknife and regional centres, to smaller communities where their clients are overwhelmingly of aboriginal descent.

The perpetuation of this dichotomous relationship -- non-native bureaucrats making decisions at the centre and aboriginal clients on the periphery coping with the consequences of these decisions -- indicates that the rise of the territorial state has resulted in limited change to the ongoing patterns of domination.[21] The logic of bureaucratic actions is rendered even more distant from, and foreign to, client populations by the fact that Ottawa continues to define the parameters within which many of these decisions are made. The increaseing percentage of aboriginal northerners on the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly and Executive Council has led to a growing recognition that the territorial bureaucracy must become more responsive to the demands of communities and to the needs of aboriginal northerners, but the election of aboriginal representatives can have only limited impact when the rules of the political and bureaucratic games are largely preestablished.

While some impediments to state-sponsored community development in the North can be attributed to entrenched systems and attitudes, others reflect more benign circumstances, only some of which are peculiar to the North. The shifting political priorities which ensue from northern consensus government and the strong central state hand which stems from territorial politicians and bureaucrats assertively defining their jurisdictional niche as limited decolonization occurs both contributed to the demise of the NWTHC's community development mandate and both are products of the northern political environment. The varying political styles of ministerial appointees and change in bureaucratic personnel, on the other hand, are factors which also combined to have destructive impact on the NWTHC's community development focus, but they cannot be attributed to uniquely northern factors.

The origins of the impediments to state-sponsored community development are thus varied. Even though some of the factors which underlie these impediments could equally influence any state initiative in any jurisdiction, the uniquely northern factors,

especially those relating to the continuation of colonial relations of power, are at once the primary reason community development is touted as a promising mode of development which holds potential for effectively casting off shackles of dependency and the seeds of community development's demise. In other words, many of the same forces and circumstances in the North that community development seeks to overcome can serve to undermine such initiatives once they have commenced. The mitigatory effects of these forces on community development endeavours will obviously be more pronounced if the state is actively engaged in the effort, for many of the powers which community development is employed to temper are entrenched within the state structure.

That impediments to northern state-sponsored community development exist should not surprise community development practitioners or theorists; indeed, given the empowerment objectives of such community development initiatives, these impediments should be fully anticipated and should form part of any strategy that guides northern community development endeavours. Unless this realization informs the community interests in northern state-sponsored community development initiatives, such efforts will almost undoubtedly succumb to state control. This, in turn, may lead to the demise of community development initiatives or to their continuance under the hegemony of the state, resulting in palliative efforts that seek to silence demands for community control while furthering the relations of power and domination which have hitherto shaped northern development.[22] Before the promise of community development can be met in the North, theorists and practitioners alike must acknowledge that these impediments may serve to undermine community development efforts under state sponsorship.

The NWTHC's community development focus resulted directly from demands placed upon the territorial state by northern communities. These demands were quickly translated into state pledges for meaningful community empowerment, and communities were asked to await the development of a draft strategy that would guide the transfer of authority to them from the NWTHC. In large part, northern communities did wait, and in so doing most of them lost the chance to define how the process of empowerment would proceed. In fact, most of them lost the immediate opportunity for change, because once state pledges sated demands for community development and communities no longer actively pressed for empowerment, internal state impediments gradually emerged and undermined efforts to deliver on the promise of a broad community development initiative.

The emergence of impediments to community development within the territorial state and NWTHC can be attributed, in part, to the fact that broad-based, protracted demands from communities for more control over housing were decreasingly in evidence following the work of the Special Committee on Housing in the mid-1980s. Two factors may explain the partial abatement of these demands. In the late 1980s, the political energies of aboriginal northerners have been focused almost exclusively on land claim issues. Final land claim agreements between Canada and the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut (the organization representing Inuit claimants) and Canada and the Dene and Metis were initialled in the spring of 1990. These agreements represent the culmination of lengthy negotiations -- negotiations which have been particularly intense in recent years. Aboriginal northerners have been actively engaged in defining the scope and content of the land claim agreements and, more recently, in negotiating the selection of community lands. The second factor relates specifically to the NWTHC and its promise of impending community empowerment. Many northern communities appear to have been willing to take at face value the repeated and convincing pledges for an encompassing strategy on community development made by housing ministers and senior bureaucrats in the late 1980s. This faith, in turn, has ultimately been answered only with state rhetoric and the furtherance of centralized state power. As well, state actions have served to ensure that broad-based community demands on the NWTHC are more difficult to articulate. The NWTHC no longer sanctions or funds the district housing federations created in the early 1980s that once provided effective forums for communities to discuss and channel their housing concerns.

Yet, in spite of the demise of the NWTHC's Community Development Strategy and the gradual dissolution of the Corporation's community development focus, community empowerment in local housing matters has occurred in a limited number of cases in recent years. The handful of northern communities that have recently entered into block-funding agreements with the NWTHC for the delivery of HAP provide evidence of this empowerment, which runs counter to the current centralization trend apparent in the NWTHC's activities. These communities have been successful in negotiating the transfer of authority from the NWTHC specifically because they have continued to engage in social action, voicing demands for meaningful community control over issues of local importance -- they have been unwilling to wait for state action on promises that have been made and broken before.[23] According to one NWTHC official:

> Now we don't go out and tell communities they should demand control. We don't go looking for communities to block-fund. But occasionally they do look for more control, and when they do, they tend to get what they want if they're serious about it. If they make their case loud and hard the politicians and bureaucrats still listen (Personal Interview).

Herein lies the key to confronting -- and negating -- the impediments to state-sponsored community development in the North: in the current neo-colonial northern political environment, consistent social action is prerequisite to the real empowerment of northern communities. Without continued and adamant community demands for such empowerment, the institutional impediments to state-sponsored community development

identified in this study will almost surely prevent the adoption of broad community development objectives by the state policy makers who continue to define and control northern development issues.

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this study community development is described as the process and product of purposive social action aimed at community empowerment, and an attempt is made to demonstrate that state-sponsored community development initiatives in Canada's North can be undermined by the emergence of institutional impediments to community empowerment. Following the work of proponents of northern community development, this study contends that community development initiatives may hold significant promise for alleviating the dependency and powerlessness experienced in northern communities which constitute, in turn, the legacy of past colonial economic and political development in Canada's North. Historical development trends in the North are described in order to demonstrate that they have resulted in, at best, only marginal benefits for northern communities. The study departs from recent scholarship on northern community development in its contention that this promise will not be met unless community development practitioners recognize that their efforts may be usurped by institutional impediments within the state structure.

Insights gleaned from critical community development theory are employed to indicate that the process of community development implies a redistribution of power and decision-making control -- a fact generally overlooked by the proponents of northern community development. This study cites the recent work of community development theorists in an effort to demonstrate that state actions are not imbued with altruistic motives and that state agents cannot be expected to relinquish state control unless in response to conflict or community demands. It also demonstrates that the continuance of such demands are required to parry the potential destructive effects of institutional impediments to state-sponsored community development.

These points are illustrated in a description of one case of state-sponsored community development in Canada's North. The study gives an account of the circumstances which led to the establishment of a community development mandate by an agency of the territorial state -- the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation -- and describes the institutional impediments which eventually undermined its community development focus and activities. Three such impediments are identified: limits on the independent actions of state agencies, shifting political priorities, and bureaucratic change and intransigence.

The primary implication of the study's findings is that in order for meaningful state-sponsored community development to occur, the activity's inherent political nature must be acknowledged by community participants. In accordance with this recognition, practitioners must not expect the state to adopt community development goals out of benevolence and they must anticipate that impediments may arise within the state apparatus which can temper the degree of community empowerment which may ensue from such initiatives. Similarly, the scholars who champion the promise of northern community development must acknowledge that community development in the North is the stuff of power and politics. Indeed, as implied in the definition of community development adopted in this study, real community development stems from community social action -- not from the desks of liberal state policy makers -- and only ongoing community demands for empowerment will ensure that the broad range of state-sponsored community development initiatives do not whither and succumb to state imperatives. If the state does exercise unmitigated control over the scope of community development endeavours, the result will not really constitute community development at all -- in spite of inevitable state rhetoric to the contrary.

Community development does hold the potential for leading northern communities out of the colonial system of domination into a new era of empowerment. The vestiges of past cooperativism and mutual responsibility which characterize the aboriginal peoples of the North do not, however, predispose northern communities as willing receptacles for state-initiated community development efforts; rather they provide a foundation upon which unified community visions of empowerment and viable strategies for social action can be built. The key to unlocking this potential lies not within the state but within northern communities themselves.

NOTES

1. The terms "North" and "northern" refer to the Canadian Northwest Territories throughout the study. While conditions similar to those described in the study may prevail in the Yukon Territory and northern provinces, the thesis makes no claim to have specific relevance in other contexts or jurisdictions.

2. It should be stressed that some earlier authors, notably Bregha (1971) and Deveaux and Deveaux (1971), do acknowledge that community development may serve the interests of the politically powerful. The work of these authors runs counter to the trend common in Canadian community development scholarship at the time of their writing.

3. In a study on early government housing programs in Canada's central and eastern Arctic, Nixon (1983) posits the altruistic motives of bureaucrats as a driving force behind the state's provision of housing for Inuit residents in the period 1954-1965. Nixon employs the ill-named notion of "representative bureaucracy," where social groups under-represented in the state structure are seen to have their causes championed by compassionate agents of the state, in an attempt to explain the delivery of early housing programs. Nixon's analysis lacks depth; it looks no further than the veneer of individual administrators' reminiscences and the rhetoric of state agents to explain state action. In later work, Nixon abandons this approach (see Nixon, 1987).

4. The fur trade industry enjoyed a brief respite from decline during the late 1960s and early 1970s. The success of international anti-fur and anti-sealing lobbies, however, assured the transitory nature of this upturn.

5. The outbreak of World War II (and its cold war aftermath) led to a flurry of military activity in the North, including the construction of a winter road from Alberta to the Mackenzie Valley, the Canol Pipeline, airfields, weather stations, radio posts and DEW Line radar installations (Collard, 1983:6,7; NWT, 1985a:19).

6. Treaty 8 was signed in 1898 with Indians of northern British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan and the Dene residing south of Great Slave Lake in the Northwest Territories. Treaty 11 was signed in 1921 with the Dene of the Mackenzie Valley. The substance and intent of these documents are presently at issue.

7. An apparent exception to the adoption of southern models for the development of local government structures in the North does exist. In 1987, the territorial Legislative Assembly passed the *Charter Communities Act*, which permitted communities to develop their own charters governing local elections, council structure and program jurisdictions. The legislation, however, does not allow for a greater range of local powers. While heralded in state rhetoric as a sensitive response to demands from the local level, no communities had adopted charters under the legislation by the summer of 1990. Critics claim that the legislation was intended to rationalize the structures set up previously in the Mackenzie Valley under different arms of the state bureaucracy -- in the 1950s and 1960s the Indian Affairs Branch established band councils while the territorial administration developed settlement councils.

8. The label consensus government intentionally evokes notions of past Dene and Inuit political practices. The modern form of politics it is used to describe are, however, decidedly strident, and, unlike true consensus decision-making, votes are taken regularly.

9. National here refers to nations of specific aboriginal peoples, such as the Dene Nation and Inuit Tapirisat of Canada/Tungavik Federation of Nunavut.

10. See Berger (1977), Rees (1986) and Rees and Hulchanski (1990) for criticisms of this perspective.

11. Due to continued population growth, over 3000 units were required to relieve overcrowding in 1989, according to the most recent NWTHC housing needs survey (see NWTHC, 1989).

12. See Rees and Hulchanski (1990) for a full historical review of the HAP block-funding experience in Fort Good Hope during the 1980s.

13. Updates on the government's progress in responding to the recommendations of the Special Committee on Housing were subsequently published in 1986 (see NWTHC, 1986a) and 1988 (see NWTHC, 1988a).

14. Agreements between CMHC and the NWTHC currently limit the types of community organizations that can administer a large portion of the northern rental housing stock. Broadening the range of sanctioned community organizations required federal Order-in-Council approval.

15. In the 1990 construction year, five northern communities received block-funding for HAP: Fort Good Hope, Fort Liard, Wrigley, Hay River Reserve and Fort Simpson/Jean Marie River.

16. This fact is discussed later in Section 5.

17. NWTHC officials were aware that CMHC, its federal funding partner, had no immediate interest in the implementation of the Community Development Strategy and would therefore not be swayed through the invocation of political arguments in support of the effort. CMHC was ultimately persuaded to support the NWTHC's community development endeavours after assurances were made that existing local housing organizations which were administratively proficient would not be unilaterally dismantled in favour of new community housing structures.

18. Dacks (1981:109-111) discusses some of the drawbacks of consensus government in the North, and notes that unlike consensus government, "parties provide for continuity beyond the political lifespans of individuals and they enable the public to impose some small degree of accountability on elected politicians."

19. This contention is supported by recent public statements made by the Minister Responsible for the NWTHC (see NWT, 1990e:536).

20. It is telling to note that Rees and Hulchanski (1990:53,54), who obtained much of their information on the community development impacts of HAP from interviews with NWTHC officials conducted in 1987 and 1988, state that "community development is not a Corporate priority per se" and "the Corporation recognizes the potential role of housing in community development but does not regard this as part of its own mandate." This erroneous conclusion may be drawn from information supplied by detractors of community development within the NWTHC, for the New Context for housing delivery and its attendant commitment to community and economic development were established in 1986 and approved by Corporation senior management, the Board of Directors and the Minister.

21. Fleras (1989) provides an illuminating discussion of how the very concepts of bureaucracy and aboriginality may be fundamentally incompatible.

22. See Morris (1989) for an insightful account of how the state and its agents can assert considerable influence over the reproduction of meaning in a colonial setting, defining both the perceptions of a dominated population and the scope of resistance to such domination.

23. The same communities that continue to demand and receive more local control over housing tend also to be successful in seeking community empowerment in other spheres. The community of Fort Good Hope provides the best example of such success. Fort Good Hope has a long history of asserting local control over issues that affect the community. In the 1970s, the community negotiated an agreement with Chevron Canada governing terms and conditions for hydrocarbon exploration on community hunting and trapping lands. Fort Good Hope has also been active in developing northern models of self-government, most recently seen in a detailed community presentation to the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly in autumn of 1989 which outlined the community's vision for local empowerment.

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